No. 4, Vol. 41 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

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# The Popular Magazine

PUBLISHED AUG. 7 1916

*Two's company*
*three's a crowd*
*unless number three is*

# Coca-Cola

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

Always welcomed by any company for its brightness and charm. Delicious and refreshing.

Demand the genuine by full name—nicknames encourage substitution.

THE COCA-COLA CO ATLANTA, GA.

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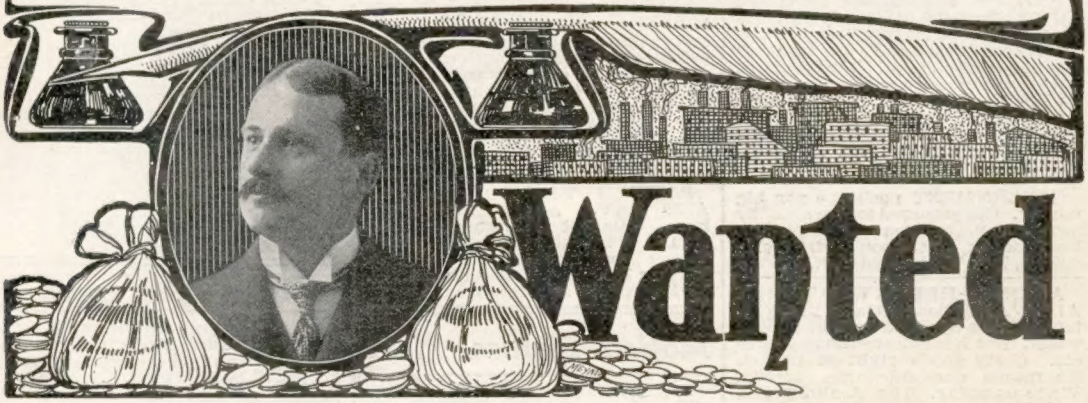

**Demand for my graduates three times greater than in any previous year. In new Art Prospectus for free mailing, America's leading authorities give valuable advice to brainy young men and women about entering the advertising field, where large salaries and partnerships await those who secure expert training.**

All authorities agree that the advertising business is today in its infancy and that the skillful ad writer is being earnestly sought by business men as never before.

More than three times as many advertisers are employing and asking for Powell graduates, compared with any previous year, and I may add that they are often willing to pay considerably more than $25 a week at the start. It is nothing uncommon for a new graduate to get a contract netting $40 or more per week.

More encouraging still for ambitious young men and women is the added fact that former students are not obliged to long remain in these starting positions.

For example, Dr. Mackenzie, whose portrait and abbreviated testimony are herewith presented, shows how Powell graduates are taken into partnerships that result in large fortunes.

This partnership phase of the advertising business has shown remarkable growth. One reason is that the trained ad writer is generally the most valued employee, and upon his skill depend in no small degree the success and growth of a given business. Another reason is that advertising enables the ambitious, steadfast student to achieve success as rapidly as his worth is proven. Red tape and long service are entirely eliminated. It is not necessary to serve in the minor clerkships and waste years trying to get a hold. The skilled ad man in reality commands the situation.

For instance, a Powell graduate is today Vice-President of one of America's great department store systems, with branches in Europe and America. A few years ago he became my student and in four months took his first position as advertising manager of the largest department store of Hamilton, Ont. You will be interested in what he says about advertising as a vocation, although general oversight of his present great business has compelled him to turn over the advertising work to others.

Men and women earning anywhere from $1,200 to $6,000 a year after receiving the benefit of my training are in all live centers throughout the country.

My new Art Prospectus, now ready for free mailing, is far more than a mere explanation of the Powell System. Not only is the whole advertising situation laid bare, but famous authorities give valuable advice to the ambitious who have at least a common-school education and desire to reach the front in the shortest time.

Why advertising instruction by the true correspondence system is far superior to the inefficient class or lecture plans, is clearly and scientifically demonstrated for the first time. The colleges and benevolent institutions have given certain preliminary, theoretical advertising information, but practical advertising instruction and skill depend on the exhaustive, expert training as given by the Powell System. In this very connection you will be interested in the findings of such leaders as *Inland Printer*, leading type founders, Y. M. C. A. directors and heads of the largest national publications, who send me students because they know they will get the best advertising training in the world.

But send for the Prospectus today.

**George H. Powell, 31 Temple Court, N. Y.**

DR. W. A. MACKENZIE
Secy. and Adv. Mgr., Lake County Land Owners' Assn., Fruitland Park, Fla.

**DECLINED $10,000 A YEAR!**

Dr. Mackenzie's three-page endorsement will be found in the new Art Prospectus. These two extracts will make you want to read his complete story: "When I enlisted as your student, it was the red-letter day of my existence. I finally declined $10,000 a year to accept a $250,000 partnership." Also: "When a young man today tells me there are no opportunities for success, I pity him. Any man with some education who will learn to apply himself and master the Powell System, I believe will make an unqualified success in the advertising business."

# CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS—HERE'S WHAT THEY ALL WANT. Concentrated Beer Tablets. Makes Genuine Beer by adding water. Not Near-Beer—the real article. Carry goods right in pocket. Enormous demand—large profits. Write us today. The Ambrew Co., 5145 Plum Street, Cincinnati, O.

AGENTS—500% profit; gold and silver sign letters for store and office windows; anyone can put on; free sample. Metallic Letter Co., 426 N. Clark St., Chicago.

$4 A DAY TO START paid Traffic Inspectors by railroads everywhere. (No office work). Wonderful opportunity for travel and advancement. Demand for trained men exceeds supply. We train you at home—in your spare time. Postal brings Free Booklet D-1. Frontier Prep. School, Buffalo, N. Y.

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WRITE Photoplays; $10—$500 each paid. Experience unnecessary; details Free to beginners. Producers League, 355, St. Louis.

## Advertising

WILL SHOW YOU by mail how you earn $25 to $100 week writing advertisements. Write for facts, free. Page-Davis Co., 5, Chicago, Ill.

## Business Opportunities

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BUY, sell and exchange all sorts old time and modern firearms. Stephen Van Rensselaer, Antiques, 22 East 34th Street, New York.

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WRITE News Items and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright book and plans Free. Press Reporting Syndicate, 448, St. Louis, Mo.

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SONG Writers "Key to Success" Free! We compose and facilitate free publication for sale. Submit Poems. Knickerbocker Studios, 530 Gaiety Bldg., New York.

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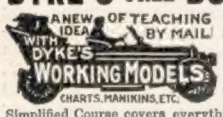


explains how we assist YOU in the Auto Business as Repairman, Chauffeur, Salesman or Auto Mechanician with DYKE'S NEW IDEA WORKING MODEL SYSTEM of teaching by mail and our new idea EMPLOYMENT PLAN. Let us tell you the names of some of our students and the salaries they are drawing. Don't miss it—SEND FOR BOOKLET NOW.

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**DYKE'S SCHOOL OF MOTORING, Box 86, Roe Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.**

A Department of Firm: A. L. Dyke, Publisher and Importer. Original and only system of its kind. Endorsed by leading motor authorities of the world.

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**Cartoonists are well paid**

We will not give you any grand prize if you answer this ad. Nor will we claim to make you rich in a week. But if you are anxious to develop your talent with a successful cartoonist, so you can make money, send a copy of this picture, with 6c. in stamps for portfolio of cartoons and sample lesson plate, and let us explain.

**THE W.L. EVANS SCHOOL OF CARTOONING**
**835 Leader Building, Cleveland, Ohio**

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Commercial Artists trained practically by members of our faculty have earned $100.00 in two days—often more.

**High Authorities Endorse This Great Course**

Earn from $25.00 to $75.00 per week. Become a Commercial Designer—uncrowded field—dignified profession. Learn to draw during your spare time by our home-study method.

**Easy to Learn—Easy to Apply**

Send today for our beautiful catalog in colors. Also our folio of commercial illustrations. Free for the asking.

**FEDERAL SCHOOL OF COMMERCIAL DESIGNING, INC.**
**3401 Warner Building, Minneapolis, Minn.**

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This is the title of our next complete novel, and in many respects it is the most original and surprising story we have published. The author is Perley Poore Sheehan, well known to fiction fans

VOLUME XLI NUMBER 4

TWICE-A-MONTH

# The Popular Magazine

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# THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XLI. AUGUST 7, 1916. No. 4.

# Pawns of Destiny

By William Morton

**Poets and philosophers have long been fond of comparing life to a chessboard upon which we are moved more or less willy-nilly, as old Omar puts it, and it is a symbol we plain everyday people can readily appreciate, for there are moments when we feel some power outside ourselves governing our word and action. And William Morton, the author of this most impenetrable mystery story, makes the Great Game still clearer to our common sight as we sense the inevitable movement of his characters to the purpose and climax which they were fated to bring about whether they willed it or not.**

(*A Complete Novel*)

## CHAPTER I.

CARMODY & CO., SOME EMPLOYEES, AND A VISITOR.

"I SEE," ventured Augustus Brown, "that the Germans have taken Vilna."

"Cut the war talk!" snapped Myron Carmody.

The chief clerk dropped the evening paper and changed color as the other swung round in his chair and glared at him.

"I say cut the war talk!" repeated Carmody angrily. "Don't talk to me about it! Do you forget the *Arctic* affair? And if I want to hear stale war news, I'm quite capable of reading it myself. I'm not blind."

He jumped up and clapped on his hat. "And, by the way," he added, struggling into his overcoat, "you just tell Miss Dent that I'll expect her here to-morrow as usual. She can't have the day off. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. But——"

"There are no 'buts!'" shouted Carmody, waving his arms. "I want reliable people. I won't tolerate an employee taking a holiday whenever he or she feels like it! I won't have it!"

He wrenched his silk umbrella from the stand and turned at the door.

"G' night!" he growled. "Don't forget what I've just said."

As the door banged viciously, the chief clerk threw up his hands and went to the window, watching mechanically the homeward-bound throng on Broadway. It had been a trying day for the whole office, thanks to Myron Carmody's capricious humor; but Brown was not thinking of his own smarting wounds, but of Miss Edna

Dent and what he must tell her. All the "dirty work" of the firm generally fell upon him.

Let it not be supposed there was any romance between these two—the new stenographer and the chief clerk of Carmody & Co.—for Augustus Brown had found his romance two years back and it flourished in a model stucco dwelling in a spot north of Fordham Heights that an enterprising and highly imaginative development company had christened "Rivermere Park." View of the Harlem River there was none—perhaps this was really a blessing in disguise—and one would be at a loss to locate anything resembling a park; but Brown was quite happy and contented. A ten-year diet of New York hall bedrooms is apt to pall on the humblest, and Augustus Brown was humble, accustomed to work hard for what, perhaps, most men would call the petty things of life.

"Hello, Gloomy Gus!" greeted a jovial voice suddenly from the door. "Cheer up; the war will soon be over!"

The other turned quickly, pleasure making his insignificant face almost imposing. "Hello, Phil! Wasn't expecting you so early. I'll be with you in a moment."

Now Doctor Phillip Renton was not an expert liar, nor had even three years in Bellevue made him callous about inflicting pain, whether with hand or tongue. He had been dodging Brown's dinner invitation for months, ever since he had happened to meet the other and thus renew an acquaintance begun a dozen years before on the Yale campus. In a good-natured, incautious moment he had consented to visit Rivermere Park, and had no wish to repeat the dose; but Brown kept after him with almost pathetic persistency, and finally Renton, in another incautious moment, had accepted the long-proffered dinner invitation, which was set for this night. That promise had haunted him like an evil dream ever since, and now, at the last moment, he meant to funk it.

"Why, I'm sorry, Gus," he said, trying his best to look it, "but I've stopped in to tell you I can't come. There's a case I simply must attend to-night." Here he had the grace to color and fumble for a cigarette, avoiding the other's eyes. "Awfully sorry, but you know men in my profession can't call a minute their own. Some other night, Gus. You'll explain the circumstances to your wife and make my excuses, won't you?"

The light died from Brown's nondescript eyes. He and his wife had prepared for this informal dinner, and to people of their strictly limited means such preparation meant something more than time and trouble.

Before he could say anything, however, Myron Carmody came blustering back into the office, and, though it was after five o'clock, Brown started guiltily as if caught shirking the day's work.

Carmody had misplaced his keys, and the enforced return had not sweetened his temper. He scowled at Renton, who blandly returned the stare, had Brown jumping about like a scared rabbit, finally located the offending keys somewhere about his own massive person, and at length went out in a towering rage after some uncomplimentary remarks directed at the chief clerk, whom he appeared to blame for his own bad memory. Brown was used to being blamed for everything that went wrong.

"The boss, eh?" commented Renton, with a smile, as the door banged. "What a sweet disposition! Some day he'll burst a blood vessel with laughing so hard. Why do you let him talk to you like that?"

"I guess that question answers itself," replied Brown simply and without resentment. "I'm not you, Phil. You're your own master. I've a good berth here, and it's taken me five years to get it. And when you're married and

have a young one you find you can stand a whole lot."

Renton eyed his old classmate with dawning sympathy and understanding.

"Besides," added Brown, "Mr. Carmody hasn't always been like this. He isn't himself, and you can't blame a man when he's sick."

"That fellow sick? Why, he's a big bruiser in the pink of condition."

Brown shook his head. "You didn't have a good look at him, Phil. I don't mean physically ill. Let me tell you something: Mr. Carmody is down on the Germans, and you know I'm a German on my mother's side——"

"Better to be a German on your mother's side than a load on her heart," laughed Renton. "I got that out of a joke book. But why should he be down on any of the European belligerents? Mr. Carmody hasn't lost any friends or relatives, has he? As for business, hasn't the war made him?"

"Yes, it's been a banner year, and he's on the road to a fortune. Those aren't the reasons. It's because that through Germany he nearly lost his life. You see, he was a passenger on the *Arctic*."

"Oh!" said Renton, in an altered voice. And his thoughts turned to that ill-fated vessel, one of the first victims of a submarine. While bound for Liverpool, she had been torpedoed off the Irish coast, and but a handful of her passengers and crew had escaped. The tragedy had occurred in October, 1914, and now it was September, 1915.

"Mr. Carmody had gone over to see about a contract with the British government," said Brown, "and since his return last December—he was a month in hospital—we've noticed a gradual change in him. He never had an angelic disposition, but all the same he never used to be tyrannical and unjust the way he's been of late. And so I think it's a case of nerves; that he has never got over that scare."

"You may be right," nodded Renton. "It must have been a terrible experience, from all accounts. And yet a big fellow like that, in the prime of life and the pink of condition—— Well, our nerves are queer customers. Has he been doctoring?"

"I don't know. I ventured to suggest something of the sort—even going so far as to mention your name—and he landed on me with both feet. That's the way he is; you never know which way he's going to jump next, and the harder you try to please him——" He broke off as the door leading to the inner offices opened and a girl entered, dressed for the street.

"Oh, pardon me!" she said apologetically, her eyes encountering shyly those of Renton. "I didn't know—I left my notebook, Mr. Brown——"

"One moment, please!" said the latter kindly, as she turned to go. He went over to her and lowered his voice: "I'm sorry, Miss Dent, but Mr. Carmody can't spare you to-morrow."

There was as much distress depicted on Brown's honest, homely face as on that of the girl as he continued: "I hate to tell you this, and yet I must, for your own good—that not to show up means dismissal. I did my best, but it was no use——"

"I know; I understand," said the girl, clenching her hands. "Thank you, Mr. Brown. It was good of you. You've—you've been so kind to me. If—if it's as bad as that, why, I'll have to come though the heavens fall." She smiled bravely and sweetly; but Brown, who could have written an essay on blasted hopes, was not deceived.

"There's an instance of Mr. Carmody's changed disposition," he sighed, as the little stenographer left the room. "It isn't that she couldn't be spared for one day; it's just that he doesn't seem to want to please anybody but himself."

Renton, during the dialogue, had

busied himself politely with the evening paper, but for all his studied absorption he had observed that this Miss Dent did not seem one to shirk her duty or to ask a day off without urgent reason. He admired the way in which she had taken what was undoubtedly a great and bitter disappointment.

"I suppose," ventured Brown, as Renton arose to go, "you couldn't drop over later? Any time would do. We didn't expect any one but you."

"No," replied the other firmly, determined not to sacrifice his hard-won escape. "I couldn't, Gus."

Renton lived in a fine old house in what was once known as the Grand Boulevard, but now designated Upper Broadway; and two hours later, after leaving the offices of Carmody & Co., found him before the log fire in the study, book in hand and pipe in mouth, while opposite him, in another armchair, sat a heavyweight English bulldog, golden of hue and with a black mask. He was a perfect specimen of his kind, direct descendant of the famous Rodney Stone.

Outside, a thin, cold rain, borne on the west wind from the Hudson, beat upon the windows, for this September night had developed all the unlovely qualities of a wet November. A book, a pipe, and a dog—this was how Renton might be found six nights out of the seven, professional duties permitting. This was the urgent case that had prevented him attending the Browns' dinner.

The old grandfather clock in the hall struck seven, and Renton hitched his chair nearer the fire and poked the logs. He did most of his thinking while idly poking the fire. There is no inspiration in contemplating a steam radiator.

"Well, John Bull," he said at length, addressing his silent companion, "this is much better than Rivermere Park, eh? You've never seen Rivermere Park, John, but take my word for it you don't want to."

John Bull vibrated his small, spiked tail and cocked a rose ear. These two, master and dog, were wont to hold long and intimate conversations, and they knew each other thoroughly.

"Of course," added Renton, "I told a thumping lie to Brown. You don't know Gus Brown, John? First-rate fellow, but—well, you know." He suddenly avoided the dog's steady eyes. "Hang it," he finished peevishly, "you look just like Brown!"

He settled himself resolutely to read, but almost immediately his pipe was out and the book in his lap. "Brown's all right, but I tell you, John, he lives in a potty stucco villa at the back of nowhere," he resumed defensively. "It has art-craft furniture and a player piano, and a fumed-oak sideboard and an electroplated coffee percolater—the kind you get with cigarette coupons. You know, John, I'm no snob; it isn't these things in themselves, but Brown's terrific enthusiasm about them that's sort of wearing. And then he has a new baby—ever hear a fond parent talk of his first offspring, John? I hope you won't ever talk as if you invented paternity. So, you see, I was quite justified in lying to Brown, and you needn't sit there like an accusing conscience. Lie down, you fat fool!"

But John Bull held definite opinions, and, moreover, was not afraid to express them in his own way. And, being a thoroughbred and no longer a flighty young puppy, these opinions were entitled to respect; therefore, when, instead of obeying, he continued to sit bolt upright, his white vest stuck out and his brown eyes fixed unwaveringly on Renton, the latter did not enforce his command. Instead, he threw aside his book and got up with a vexed laugh.

"Yes, Brown's all right," he resumed at length, returning to the fire. "One of the best. Must be pretty rotten, too,

to be under a driver like that Mr. Carmody. And, John, I don't want you to get away with the idea that there's anything wrong with Mrs. Brown. Not a bit of it! She's a mighty nice little woman in every way. And the baby's no comic valentine, either. Brown has every right to be proud of 'em both. Still, you know——" Renton laughed and fetched John Bull a sound thump in his massive and prominent ribs. "You're right, old man. I know what you're thinking. Pretty shabby way to treat an old classmate, eh? Hardly up to the spirit of Old Eli? Well, if you stop looking like that I'll do as you say, but if I catch pneumonia and die a martyr to hospitality——"

With an air of resignation, he lifted the desk telephone, called Brown's number, and soon had him on the wire.

"Hello, Gus! Any room for a repentant sinner? Yes, I'm coming—if you'll let me. You're sure I'm not too late?" The hearty and genuine pleasure in the other's reply left no room for doubt, and Renton hung up the receiver feeling, somehow, happier than he had for many a day. To be liked for one's self is not a gift to be lightly esteemed, and the Browns' friendship had no tinge of self-seeking.

Whether John Bull understood all this or saw merely that his master was no longer secretly troubled at heart is of little consequence; the fact remains that he gave a satisfied grunt, ceased staring at Renton, and curled up contentedly in his chair, apparently assured of a duty well done.

"You are served, sir," announced Peter, appearing at the sliding doors leading to the dining room.

"I can't help it," sighed Renton. "I'm dining out, Peter. Forgot all about it till this blessed minute. Order round the car, will you——"

"The limousine, sir?"

"No, the small one. Don't kick up Jules; I'll drive myself. It's too bad a night for any mortal to be out on anything but—er—pleasure."

A few minutes later, Renton, in his small coupé, was speeding up Broadway through the pelting rain, his most direct route being via Highbridge.

Thus, through the conquest of self and the performance of a proper action, he found himself involved in a web of circumstance that was destined to produce a profound effect not only on his own life, but the lives of others.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE WEB OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

As he drove homeward, taking the route by which he had come, Renton reflected on the biblical truth that the greatest enjoyment is found in giving pleasure to others, and he wondered at the dread with which he had regarded this evening and the shabby subterfuge to which he had stooped in trying to avoid it.

He had really enjoyed himself in a simple but wholesome fashion. Brown and he had sung the old glees to Mrs. Brown's none too expert accompaniment, talked over all the old gossip, and he had even gone up to have a look at the prize baby. Nor had he felt bored when Brown spoke intimately of household matters and paraded the coffee percolator and its companion, the inevitable chafing dish. He had even participated in the solemn rite of the Welsh rabbit, quite as interested in the difficult proceedings as the flushed and pretty Mrs. Brown, and sharing her triumph at its ultimate success. Yes, these were perhaps the petty things of life, and yet——

He stirred restlessly, comparing the "potty stucco villa" with the Renton mansion, Brown's life with his own. One house was a home, the other—the Renton mansion—little better than a historic museum. He felt strangely lonely, something he had never experi-

enced before. Somehow to-night he envied Gus Brown.

The coupé turned into one of the side streets lying between the Harlem River and Broadway; one of those streets as yet untouched by modern progress and containing gingerbread wooden houses of a bygone era. A shabby, genteel street, a street of memories, its inhabitants evidently those of restricted means who preferred fresh air, sunlight, and an entire dwelling, however run-down and out of the way, to a cubicle in a modern flat house. Not an imposing row of houses by any means, yet managing to preserve some claim to bygone glories. Building operations were in progress at all four points of the compass, the gas lamps few and far between, while the venerable cobblestones caused the car to bounce violently.

Renton slowed down and picked his way cautiously, peering through the blurred glass. Then, as he passed the last house and was about to make the turn into Broadway, he suddenly applied the brakes. Not a moment too soon, for a dark object loomed up across his path. At first he thought it some building material left carelessly without the obligatory red signal, but the coupé's electric headlights soon showed it to be the prostrate figure of a man.

Renton sprang out and bent over the other, examining with practiced eye and hand. This victim of a probable accident murmured a few words feebly and then lapsed into unconsciousness. Blood still flowed from a deep wound in the back of his head. He was middle-aged, perhaps fifty, tall and gaunt, with a thin, ascetic face. Obviously a man of the middle class, neither rich nor poor.

Renton wondered what he should do. The man was seriously hurt, it was late, a lonely and desolate neighborhood, not a policeman in sight, and far from the nearest hospital, Fordham. Then he heard a hurried step, and the next moment a girl entered the avenue of light cast by the car's electrics.

"Is there anything I can do?" she asked, with tremulous eagerness. "Is he badly hurt?"

Renton looked up quickly and gratefully. She was standing bareheaded, coatless, oblivious of the pelting rain and keen, driving wind. "He is badly hurt," he answered. "A compound fracture——"

"Can't I get a doctor? I know the neighborhood."

"I'm a doctor," said Renton. "There's no use calling an ambulance. He needs immediate attention——"

"Bring him to my home," she interrupted quickly; "it's only a step." And she pointed to the nearest house in the shabby row.

"Thanks," said Renton, in his curt, boyish way. "Will you get my bag from the car? I always keep one there for emergencies."

He lifted the unconscious man as if he were a baby, and, on reaching the house, was shown upstairs to a bedroom by the girl. A faded, silver-haired woman hovered ineffectually in the background; but it was the girl who attended to all his wants and who proved a substantial help, never flinching at sight of the work he must do.

At the end of half an hour, he turned down his sleeves and resumed his coat. He had never worked harder or more skillfully—and never to less purpose. "Nothing more can be done," he said. "I doubt if he'll regain consciousness. It was hopeless from the first. I've done my best."

"No one could do more," she replied simply.

They spoke in whispers, but without constraint, as if they had known each other from infancy. They were partners in a common cause, the saving of a human life. They sat in silence, watching the gaunt figure on the bed.

"Don't you think," said the girl at length, "that we'd better find out who he is and telephone his people?"

"Then you don't know him?"

She shook her head. "But he may live in the neighborhood. If we only knew his name!"

"I took it for granted you knew him," said Renton slowly. "You are quite sure?"

She looked her surprise. "Quite. I never saw him in my life before."

"Then we must find out."

He made a thorough search of the man's pockets, but the only article disclosed was a cheap fountain pen. "Money, watch, wallet—everything gone," said Renton. "Not a clew to his identity. And I'm afraid he will never speak."

The tears came to the girl's eyes, but she did not cry. "Somebody's father, perhaps. Somebody's brother—dying here, all alone, in the house of a stranger. Oh, it is terrible, pitiful! What can we do?"

There was a convulsive movement on the bed, a gasp, the faintest of sighs, and then silence. Something was in the room that had not been there before.

"Nothing," said Renton gravely, as he pulled the shabby coverlet over the gray, strangely peaceful face. "We can do nothing. It is out of our hands. Come!" He touched her arm, and she followed obediently. Reaction had set in, and she was trembling.

"You have been very good, very brave," he said gently. "I thank you. It isn't every one these days, Miss Dent, who would play the good Samaritan as you have. People hate to be disturbed, to risk notoriety."

She looked up quickly, her eyes dark and startled. "How did you know?" A faint flush tinged her cheek. "Oh, I see! I—I understand why your face seemed familiar, why I felt I should know you. You were talking in the office with Mr. Brown this evening?"

"Yes. My name is Renton."

In the old-fashioned parlor, the silver-haired woman was waiting, and the girl introduced her as her mother. Renton reflected that at one time she must have possessed much of her daughter's physical attractiveness, but never the other's strength of character nor that charm which he was finding it so difficult to define. He sensed also a vague hostility in Mrs. Dent's manner, not so much against himself as the proceedings in general. She looked a woman who had suffered and who suggested submerged "family." And with the eye of the physician he saw she was not in the best of health.

"I hope," she said anxiously, on hearing the news, "there won't be any publicity. Will there, doctor?"

Renton hesitated. "Well, my immediate duty is to notify the coroner. You know, in all such cases of sudden death, even when there is no mystery, that must be done——"

"But there is no mystery here," protested Mrs. Dent. "You can give a certificate of death——"

"But it is for the coroner's jury to decide who caused that death. I am satisfied it's a case of murder, not accident."

"M-murder?" Mrs. Dent's pale lips framed the question.

"Murder," repeated Renton. "The wound that caused death was made by some blunt instrument. Besides, the man has been robbed. I'm sorry, but you cannot avoid publicity of a sort."

"This comes of interfering in what doesn't concern one!" exclaimed Mrs. Dent, a hectic flush on her thin cheek as she looked accusingly at her daughter. "I don't want those horrible newspaper men here. I don't want my home invaded—— Edna!" For the girl had risen with a determined air, as if about to speak.

"It's no use, mother," she said. "I must tell what I know. You are right,

doctor, it is murder, for I saw the whole thing."

"Now," wailed Mrs. Dent, collapsing in a chair, "you'll be dragged into the police court, and we won't have a moment's peace! I told you it was no concern of yours."

"I had gone to my room to prepare for bed," said the girl, turning to Renton. "It's in the front of the house, overlooking the street. Before turning on the light, I went to pull down the shades, and I saw a man coming from the Broadway corner. It was the man who is now dead, though it was so dark I couldn't see then what he looked like. At first I thought him intoxicated, for he was walking in the middle of the road and from side to side. But I soon saw that it was as if he were unfamiliar with the neighborhood, was lost, in fact, and trying to get his bearings. Also he gave me the impression of one who half expected to be followed and considered himself in some danger. Perhaps I'm wrong about this, and he was only trying to identify the street. But I'm telling you just what I thought at the time, and you know, perhaps, what queer ideas sometimes enter one's mind. At all events, his movements interested me enough to keep me standing there at the window.

"On the Broadway corner there's a lamp, and, just before you come to it, a brick pile where they're going to start building. Perhaps you noticed it. Well, as this man passed the brick pile I saw a figure step out quickly, creep up, and hit him from behind. The man fell without a cry—at least I heard none—and the other bent over him.

"It had all happened so suddenly and obscurely that I stood for a moment wondering if I had not imagined it all. Then I ran downstairs. It took me a little time to explain to my mother what had happened——"

"I didn't want her to go out," put in Mrs. Dent, on the verge of tears. "We—we live alone, and I was frightened."

"So, when I got there, it was to find you," finished the girl simply. "Not more than five minutes could have passed since the man was struck, but I knew it was no use taking up the chase. Besides, we had other work to do."

Renton nodded, admiring her clear, straightforward statement. "Yes, it would have been impossible to track him on a night like this, and in such a neighborhood. Have you any idea what he looked like?"

"None."

He turned to Mrs. Dent. "You have seen the man upstairs. Do you know him?"

"I do not. And, to the best of my knowledge, he doesn't live in the neighborhood."

"My mother would hardly be likely to know him when I don't," put in the girl.

Renton eyed her for a moment in silence. "The only clew to his identity is a coat tab marked 'Bloch, Chicago,' and that, in all likelihood, will yield nothing," he said at length. "I'll notify the police and the coroner. You and I, Miss Dent, will have to give our evidence."

He turned to the faded, silver-haired woman, his manner gentle and sympathetic, as if he were addressing a child. There were moments when she reminded him somewhat of his own mother, now dead.

"There's no need to distress yourself needlessly about this, Mrs. Dent," he said, "for unfortunately it's an incident that's all too common. The papers will give it only a few lines, if they condescend to notice it at all. Plainly the man was the victim of a footpad, and the remains will be identified at the morgue or through the usual police channels."

But when Renton was back in his study, he sat up half the balance of the night, poking the fire and thinking. Was the case so simple as it seemed, even though it escaped the publicity Mrs. Dent dreaded? Murder! The ugly word had left its mark on his own life.

## CHAPTER III.

### AN UNEXPECTED PROMOTION.

The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of willful murder against some person or persons unknown; and, as Renton had predicted, the affair received from the press but a few lines in an obscure corner. Precinct and headquarters detectives visited the scene as a matter of routine, and the victim was transferred to the morgue, where, however, no one came forward to identify him or claim the remains. In due time they would have been consigned to potter's field but for Renton, who gave them burial in Woodlawn and paid for it out of his own pocket. The action was characteristic.

The names of Miss Dent and her mother had not been mentioned in connection with the affair, and the only inconvenience the former suffered was the necessity of appearing before the coroner. This in itself she did not mind, but it brought her again under Myron Carmody's notice.

"What!" he exclaimed to Brown, the usual go-between. "Wants the afternoon, eh? Certainly not! Didn't you tell her what I said the other day?"

"Yes, sir, and she did not take the day off. But this isn't any affair of her own. She has to appear before the coroner—in connection with that Highbridge murder."

"What Highbridge murder? What are you talking about?"

"Why," stammered Brown, looking as if he were guilty of that midnight deed, "it was in the papers, but I suppose you didn't see it."

Carmody grunted. "And what has Miss Dent got to do with it?"

"It was in her house the man died. She lives up that way."

"Does she tell you all her affairs?" asked Carmody. "Careful, there, Brown. You live up that way, too, don't you? Remember you're a married man."

The chief clerk flushed. There was a coarse streak in Myron Carmody, showing more often of late, which he detested. "I know nothing of Miss Dent's affairs," he replied stiffly. "I know of her being mixed up in this affair simply because the doctor who found and attended the injured man happens to be a personal friend of mine."

"Oh, does he happen to be the fellow you recommended to me? What was his name—Benton?"

"Renton. He's not altogether unknown," said Brown dryly, jealous for his friend's reputation. "He's a young man, of course, but he has Fifth Avenue offices——"

"And Fifth Avenue prices, eh? Well, if ever I decide to try him you'll get your rake-off, Brown. This new generation has touting down to a fine art."

Brown colored again. "Doctor Renton is my friend. Moreover, he has no need to tout for patients."

"Huh!" said Carmody. "Get back to your work and send this Miss Dent in here. I'll have a look at her."

Miss Dent, during her two weeks with the firm, had seen little of her employer, for her duties lay in the sales department under the head of Augustus Brown, Carmody having a stenographer of his own. This latter was a favored personage, no longer quite young, for whom Miss Dent had substituted once or twice. Her name was Carmichel, and much care and attention had managed to preserve in some degree what at one time must have been decided physical charms.

"Sit down," said Carmody, pointing to a chair beside his desk, as Miss Dent entered. "Miss Carmichel, kindly report to Mr. Brown."

The gorgeous stenographer arose with a slight shrug and smile; and, in passing from the room, she eyed the small waiting figure in black, her scrutiny critical and contemptuous.

Carmody, too, eyed Miss Dent critically, so that presently she began to feel uncomfortable. He had placed her facing the light, and presently he began to talk to her in a fatherly, reassuring way until the girl, who had heard rumors of her employer's temper, began to wonder if the office staff had not misjudged him.

"And so you have to appear before the coroner?" said Carmody. "Yes, Mr. Brown told me about it. An unfortunate affair in which it seems you behaved admirably."

"Oh, I did nothing," she protested shyly and with a flush. "It was Doctor Renton who did everything—everything." She was nervous and showed it, being unaccustomed to this notice from an employer.

"You live alone with your mother?" pursued Carmody kindly. "Is your father dead?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" said Carmody, nodding sympathetically. "Well, Miss Dent, of course you may have the afternoon off. I think you should be thankful this hasn't proved a sensational newspaper case. Though I understand the man was robbed, there were, of course, articles proving his identity, so there won't be any mystery."

"But there were no articles. I was present when Doctor Renton searched him."

"Oh, but there must have been something, you know. Papers, a ring——"

"Nothing, Mr Carmody," said the girl earnestly. "Nothing but an old fountain pen—just the ordinary kind that any one might have."

"Indeed! Oh, well, there's no mystery and no sensationalism. You needn't be afraid of this interview with the coroner. It's only a matter of form." And Carmody rose as a sign of dismissal. His manner was still paternal, and he went so far as to open the door for her, a courtesy he had once accorded Miss Carmichel.

"I may say I'm very well satisfied with your work," he said, with a kindly smile. "And, by the way, the next time you feel in need of a holiday, just come to me. I prefer dealing with my employees direct. There should be that spirit in every successful business. Reciprocity and mutual confidence and esteem, Miss Dent. That is the great thing."

He stared after her a long moment, a hand plucking at his incipient double chin. Then he closed the door and paced the floor, pulling hard on a cigar.

Later he spoke to Brown:

"What's this Miss Dent getting?"

"Ten, with a promise of a raise at the end of the year. You said not to give more for beginners."

"Quite right. Half of them aren't worth that. So this is her first job, eh?"

"Yes, she's straight from the business college."

"Um-m! She's a capable girl, Brown. Don't think I can remember having one who could take down better or quicker. Pity about her, too. Widowed mother, only support, and all that."

Brown, whose forte wasn't asking personal questions, was surprised at his employer's recently acquired knowledge. But he said nothing.

"In fact," pursued Carmody expansively, "I think I'll give that little girl a chance in here. She deserves it." He hummed and eyed his cigar ash. "I haven't been satisfied with Miss Carmichel's work for some time. You can let her go, Brown."

"Miss Carmichel, sir?"

"Yes!" roared Carmody, with a sudden display of his old temper. "Are you getting deaf? I said Miss Carmichel. Give her a month's pay, if you have to, but I don't want to see her here to-morrow, understand? I'm tired looking at that hand-painted map of hers and her solid-ivory dome. Miss Dent will take her place. I'll give her a trial."

## CHAPTER IV.

### MR. BROPHY IS NOT SATISFIED.

"Mr. Brophy, sir," announced Peter. "Are you at home, sir?"

"I am," replied Renton, removing the protesting John Bull from his chair before the fire. "Show him in."

He had been half expecting such a visit, for he knew Brophy and had seen him climb from patrolman to precinct detective. Some day he would be promoted to headquarters—when a different clique of politicians held the reins. Brophy was no genius, but then his work lay in hard, matter-of-fact New York and not pages of fiction. He was ambitious, painstaking, had plenty of common sense, and a good firsthand knowledge of criminals. These qualities, such as they were, took him as far, perhaps, as those more brilliant and spectacular.

He entered almost noiselessly—a typical specimen of his kind; big, clean looking, alert, and capable. There was nothing of the eccentric and fantastic gumshoe business about this man or his methods. He looked what he was, and, by the knowing, would have been singled out anywhere for what he was.

He had hardly crossed the threshold before John Bull, with a lightning spring and savage growl, had him pinned in a corner.

"Don't move!" cried Renton. "Here, John! Come here, sir!"

"Leave him be, doc," said Brophy out of a corner of his thin, wide mouth. His pale-blue eyes were fixed on the menacing figure of the dog, who was watching him as narrowly with lowered head and bared teeth. "This is a new game on him, and he's right to size me up. He don't know we're friends."

It was an admirable test of the man's nerve, for he was quite cool and collected, though none knew better than he that a false or hasty move might place him in a vise that nothing short of a red-hot poker would open—perhaps not even that, for the thoroughbred bull has been known to suffer amputation and die with his undershot jaws still locked.

"Close your hand," ordered Renton, "and let him smell it——"

"I know," nodded the other, extending a big fist.

The dog examined it carefully, sniffed at Brophy's square-toed shoes, scrutinized him from every angle, and then walked off with wagging tail, this being the signal that the blockade was raised and the visitor admitted to the freedom of the port.

"It's a good thing you know dogs," said Renton. "I'm awfully sorry, but, really, he isn't vicious. He's just particular about visitors and insists upon being introduced."

"It was my own fault for coming in quietlike—a habit of mine," dismissed Brophy. "Yes, I know bulls; used to breed 'em. That fellow's your best burglar insurance, doc; I'd hate to crack this crib with him waiting for me."

"Well, what about the Highbridge case?" asked Renton, as they sat down before the fire. For, though intimate with Brophy, he could not regard this as a social visit. "Still working on it?"

The other nodded, clasping his large hands. "The old man," he said, referring to the revered captain of his precinct, "ain't quite happy with the idea that strong-arm men are running round loose in his pasture—even if it is out among the goats."

"Is that headquarters' idea?"

"Sure. They've passed it up. Ain't enough in it to worry those high-class brains down there. Common garden variety of holdup, see? But, like the old man, I ain't satisfied, either. We've canned the old Gas House Gang, and a stunt like that hasn't been pulled off in this precinct for many a day."

"It can happen in the best, Brophy."

"I know it, but it didn't happen here. Take it from me, that fellow was croaked for something more than his wad. They must have taken a lot of stuff that wasn't worth anything—but stuff that might have identified him. Else why take it?"

"Yes, but, being hurried, the thief wouldn't pick and choose. He'd make a clean haul of everything——"

"Such as a pocket handkerchief, and yet leave a fountain pen, eh? That's headquarters' idea, but it ain't mine. I guess the handkerchief had initials, and the pen none. By the way, where is that pen? Find it yet?"

"No, it must have dropped out of my pocket somewhere that night. But it had no initials, nothing that would furnish a possible clew, for I examined it thoroughly."

"And there was nothing else?" Brophy's pale eyes were fastened on Renton's profile.

"Absolutely nothing."

"Well," said the other, laying a large hand on either knee and looking straight at Renton, "this is what I've come about. I ain't satisfied about Mrs. Dent and her daughter, and, seeing you're a friend of theirs, I thought mebbe you could save them some trouble. They haven't been but a few months in that neighborhood, but do you mind saying how long you've known them?"

"Since the night of the murder, though I saw Miss Dent before that." And Renton told of the meeting in Carmody's office. "If I've been rather frequently to the house since then, it's—it's because I'm prescribing for Mrs. Dent."

His eyes challenged Brophy's. "I feel sorry for them, as any one would. Their means are restricted, and Mrs. Dent can't afford the medical advice she should have. Yes, you may consider me as a friend of theirs. They are mighty nice people in every way, and you've no right to say——"

"Easy there, doc. I'm saying nothing. All I ask is that you play straight with me. I'm not wishing to make trouble for any friends of yours unless I have to."

"Play straight with you?" Renton flushed angrily. Then he laughed. "Why, you old flathead, you've known me for ten years!"

"Sure, but you ain't known the Dents for ten years, nor have I. Why should Mrs. Dent get into such a flutter about publicity? What's she afraid of? Let me say we've only Miss Dent's word for it as to when and where the man was killed——"

"You've not. I can prove that, and I did prove it. The blood was still flowing when I got there——"

"I know. I'm not saying they'd a hand in it. But Miss Dent would at least have had time to remove all traces of identification and any incriminating evidence before you arrived. They may be shielding the murderer, see?"

Renton stared into the fire, his lips compressed. "You've put to me some questions I've been trying to answer myself," he said at length. "I'm no more satisfied than you. I can't explain it, but I *feel,* somehow, and did from the first, that the death of that man is connected in some way with the Dents. Yet I'm absolutely sure they've no guilty knowledge."

He got up and walked the floor, Brophy watching him narrowly. "I feel about this case as you do," pursued Renton earnestly, "and am quite as anxious to get to the bottom of it. I'm sat-

isfied there's more in it than anybody suspects. But if you think I'm keeping back any clew to the victim's identity, or that I'm trying to shield the Dents, you're all wrong, Brophy. I'm satisfied they don't need shielding of that sort."

"Well, that's all I wanted to know, doc. You're young, and I thought mebbe for the sake of a pretty girl——"

"I'd lie, eh? Well, I probably would, Brophy, if there was any necessity. I suppose it wouldn't be the first time. But you may rest assured of a straight deal in this case. I don't want the Dents troubled unnecessarily, and I think I can convince you that Miss Dent has told nothing but the absolute truth."

"All right," said Brophy. "That's good enough for me."

Renton sat by the fire thinking long after the detective had gone. There was no use trying any longer to conceal from himself the fact that he was interested in Edna Dent, and perhaps had been unconsciously from the moment he first saw her in Carmody's office. It was all very well to classify himself as a friend and family physician, but that would not go down with his inner self—nor had it with Brophy, for that matter.

Women had never bulked large in Renton's life; he had ignored many an opportunity for marriage in his own set and circle, and now fate had ordained that the first member of the opposite sex who had ever really stirred him should be a girl about whom he knew absolutely nothing

For it seemed as if the harder he tried to know the Dents, the less he succeeded; they were uniformly polite and appreciative of his many little acts of service, but there was an impalpable barrier he could not pass. This nettled him, for he was not accustomed to sue for friendship. There were times when Miss Dent seemed to thoroughly enjoy his society, only, the next moment, to treat him almost rudely. More than once, hot with resentment, he vowed inwardly never to see her again, but it was the old story of the moth and the flame. He seemed in a fair way of becoming a badly singed moth. At all events, the time had come for him to say what so far he had kept to himself.

He found the opportunity the following evening, when, after paying his now customary visit to Mrs. Dent, her daughter saw him to the door.

"May I see you alone for a moment?" he asked. And, wondering, she led the way to the parlor. Her eyes had darkened and she had lost color.

"Is it about my mother?" she asked nervously. "Is she worse?"

"She has a weak heart and must be careful, as I warned her, of any violent exertion or emotion. She's anæmic, too, but her cold is a simple one and there's nothing to worry about. But that isn't what I wish to speak about, Miss Dent; it's this affair of last week. There's a detective of this precinct, Brophy by name, who means to make trouble for somebody over it—if he can. He doesn't think it an ordinary robbery, nor, for that matter, do I. He's convinced there's more back of it than appears on the surface."

"Well?" Her eyes and manner were disconcerting, and Renton looked his embarrassment.

"Well, Brophy's a friend of mine—at least, I've known him since he was a patrolman and his beat was in my neighborhood. And—well, he doesn't want to come bothering you with questions——"

"Certainly not. Why should he?" Then she arose, her face flaming. "Do you mean this detective actually thinks I know more than I told the coroner? Is that it?"

Renton stammered and looked at his hat, turning it over and over in his hands as if it were some strange curio placed there by an unseen presence.

He looked very big and boyish at that moment.

"The police are no respecter of persons," he said at length. "It's their business to suspect everybody. Why, Brophy even suspected me, well as he knows me! He thought I was holding something back."

She laughed a hard little laugh. It seemed to convey knowledge of more bitter experiences than her years and appearance warranted. "And you think I am holding something back? Is that it, Doctor Renton?"

"Well," he blurted out, "if you didn't know the victim of this murder, he certainly knew you. I *have* been keeping something back from Brophy because I wanted to tell you first——"

"What do you mean? Kindly explain yourself." Her eyes had become very cold and bright.

"I mean," said Renton, "that when I first reached the man that night he was just lapsing into unconsciousness. And he was muttering a name—your name. He said 'Edna Dent' two or three times distinctly. Of course there may be other people by that name, but, considering where the man was found——"

"Why have you kept this back?"

Renton had another look at his hat. "Well, I told you that night I took it for granted you knew the man, but you denied it, and so did your mother, though I asked if you were quite sure. I—I didn't like to say I had reason to doubt you——"

"But you've volunteered to find out for your friend, Mr. Brophy, why I told an untruth about it? I see, Doctor Renton. Very clever of you both. A visiting physician may be able to discover what the police cannot, for then one wouldn't be on one's guard. If—if you give me your account, there will be no need for you to call here again."

"Miss Dent, I—I——"

"I don't wish to listen to anything further, Doctor Renton. You have accused me of falsehood and a guilty knowledge of this crime——"

"Pardon me, I have not!" He was so angry and exasperated that he could have shaken her; and, after some futile attempts at words, he clapped on his hat and stalked from the house, vowing never to return.

## CHAPTER V.

### NO. 1312.

The execution was over. It had been a painful affair, perhaps far more so to Renton than to even the big, stolid negro who had gone to the chair without a tremor and paid his debt to society and the law.

Renton had attended solely from a sense of duty, for the superintendent was a personal friend and the invitation to be present a mark of signal favor. He had found nothing in the spectacle but nausea and the reënforced conviction that Christianity, rather than following the teachings of the Master, still clung to the vengeful Mosaic law of an eye for an eye. He believed until this principle was abandoned the burning problem of the criminal would stand where it stood to-day.

"I can't believe in the death penalty," he said to the superintendent, as they emerged from the sinister "Room with the Little Door." "I can't see the difference between a murder by the State and by the individual. Crime is a disease——"

"I know," said the other indulgently. "I've heard all that before. But amputation's the only cure for that disease. Society must be protected, and there are natures to which nothing appeals but the fear of death."

"Did the fear of death stop that negro from killing his wife?"

"He's been stopped, anyway, from killing somebody else's wife," replied the superintendent, "and that's the main thing, as I look at it. We're arguing

from irreconcilable viewpoints, Renton; you're the calm, aloof observer, and I'm not. I admit our prison system and penal code are not perfect by any means, but you've got to give us something more than talk for a safe working substitute. You, and others like you, build theories for an imaginary world. If you were among the herd and came in daily contact with some of these fellows, you'd learn that what you call their disease can no more be cured than hydrophobia."

"Nonsense!"

"It's not nonsense. I tell you there are men who place absolutely no value on human life, whether it's their own or their neighbor's. Men who take pleasure in killing just as a wild animal takes pleasure. You can do nothing with such fellows, many of whom are as highly educated as yourself. Their moral sense is dead, or they've been born without any."

Renton believed that, speaking broadly and in its fullest sense, education is a deterrent to crime. But he said nothing. He was no rabid reformer, hitting right and left against the existing order of things, and he held a due respect for the opinions of others. Markham, the superintendent, was an excellent fellow, and, moreover, knew his work thoroughly.

"And it's all right to say that the aim of the law should be corrective and not vengeful," continued Markham, rendered more argumentative by the other's silence, "but you've got to take human nature into account. If we hadn't State executions, we'd have more lynching bees. Apply the question to yourself. Suppose a close friend or relative of yours was brutally murdered, how would you feel about it? Would you like to see the murderer being treated merely as an ignorant or sick member of society who didn't know any better?"

"I think—I hope I should be above any thought of revenge," said Renton slowly. "It's an interesting question, Markham, and you've a chance of putting it to the test."

The other eyed him curiously. "How? What do you mean?"

"That there's a man in this prison," replied Renton, "by the name of John Radcliffe. He's been here about ten years. That was before you came, before I knew you. This man Radcliffe murdered my uncle."

The superintendent whistled softly. "Was Anthony Allerdyce your uncle? You don't say! You must forgive me, Renton; I didn't know I was striking so near home with my remarks. Have you ever seen this Radcliffe?"

"No, and I haven't wished to," said Renton slowly. "I was studying at Bonn when the—thing happened, and I didn't return from Germany until long after the trial."

"It was a most cold-blooded, brutal crime," said Markham "I know how you must have felt over it."

"No," replied Renton, in the same slow voice. "I don't think you do. Ordinarily uncles and nephews aren't particularly attached to each other, but we were. He was one of the kindliest, biggest-hearted men that ever lived, Markham. He was the only father I ever knew, and better than many a father. And it was his fate—this kindly, gracious old gentleman who had never harmed any one in all his life—to be tortured to death by a fiend in human form! That's the justice of the world." He got up suddenly—they had entered Markham's office—and stared out of a window into the prison yard. His emotions were visible, painful, and intense.

He turned at length with a forced smile. "I stayed in Germany for a time because I felt an overmastering impulse to come back here and pay this John Radcliffe in his own coin. The punishment of the law, a life sen-

tence, seemed to me a mockery, a travesty of justice——"

"It was, in a sense," put in Markham. "He should have got the chair if ever a man did. The young lawyer who defended him made his name and fortune—the fortune came afterward. But don't think Radcliffe got off easy. He had a spell in the jute mill until he had to go to hospital. That was before my time, of course. And a whole lot prefer the chair to a life stretch."

Renton winced. "At that time I was ten years younger than I am now, Markham, and even the death sentence wouldn't have satisfied me. I craved a personal, physical revenge. I longed to get my bare hands on this man and make him suffer all his victim had suffered. Moses and his law wasn't in it compared to what I felt in those days. I always had strong passions," he finished simply, "and it's taken something to down them."

Markham said nothing, but he was thinking how little he had known the real Renton who, in a flash, stood revealed to him. He had always thought him rather sluggish and incapable, perhaps, of any deep emotion; certainly the last one, he would have said, to possess passions such as he described. He seemed so boyish, so easy-going and tolerant to the point of weakness.

"So, you see," continued Renton, "I can quite understand what you say about lynching bees and all that. I can understand and even sympathize with the spirit of the mob. I can understand the personal application of this question, even though I'm no longer that young medical student of ten years back, even though I've evoluted since then and my attitude toward the problem of the criminal has changed. What my theories are worth—well, I would like to see this John Radcliffe. I would like to test myself, to find out if I really have risen above the craving for personal revenge which haunted me so long. It's not merely a morbid curiosity to see for the first time what this man looks like or to gloat over his suffering—if he has suffered."

"Oh, he has suffered," said Markham. "I think if you saw the man—well, let us go. I've made him a trusty in the library. It's all he's fit for now, poor fellow. The best of prisons isn't exactly a sanitarium, Renton, and under the old régime Radcliffe came through—well, hell. There's no other word for it. He was an incorrigible, you see."

If Renton still entertained any doubts of his attitude toward the murderer of his uncle, they were stilled forever at sight of John Radcliffe, or No. 1312, as he had been known for ten years. What the man had looked like originally Renton did not know; he could not have been young when sentence was pronounced, but now he looked so old, so horribly old as if he had lived a hundred lifetimes in those ten years. You could see it in his eyes more than in anything else. They haunted Renton.

The old régime, of which Markham spoke, had been a monstrous scandal and the former warden a politician of the worst type. He and the majority of the hired bullies under him were far greater thieves than the unfortunates they were set to guard, and quite as brutal as any inmate of Murderers' Row. Methods of "discipline" were enforced that would have delighted a South Sea savage, and Radcliffe had known this "discipline" to the full. He had been a strong man, and he had been "broken." There is no more awful spectacle in the world.

"You know," said Markham, as they left the library, "Radcliffe always insisted that he had nothing to do with the Allerdyce murder. Of course the evidence was circumstantial; it generally is, for otherwise there would be few convictions. It isn't often that a crime is actually witnessed. And you

won't find many inmates of Murderers' Row who'll own up to their guilt. But Radcliffe's stubbornness got him into trouble in other ways with the late warden; he got the whole machinery down on him—and it was terrible machinery for manhandling. We know that now. It was making murderers out of thieves and thieves out of murderers. The place was honeycombed with graft from the warden down—at the State investigation the graft of the head trusty alone was shown to be over three thousand a year."

"Yes," said Renton.

"And the other things—well, those who didn't know the old régime would say, and did say, that such things couldn't happen in a civilized country," pursued Markham. "But they *did* happen, and they're happening yet in some prisons throughout the country. They jacketed Radcliffe—fifty hours at a stretch. They gave him solitary, they thumbed him and beat him up—pulped him out of recognition. He was an incorrigible, you see, and they set out to break him. You saw the result."

Renton saw again, in his mind's eye, the trusty in the prison library—that prematurely aged man, bent and broken and robbed of all but his reason. He saw again the bleared and shifty eye—"solitary" in the dungeons had made him almost blind—the palsied hand, the cringing, abject manner, the cracked, whispering voice—for "solitary" had deprived him almost of speech, too. Once this had been a man, a man who symbolized the spirit of rebellion, a man who had dared to "lip" the omnipotent warden, break the prison rules, defy the law, and curse the universe. Was it possible?

"Thank God," pursued Markham, "that sort of thing is over and done with—at least I can vouch for it here. It's no wonder there was such an outcry, such a demand for prison reform. All the same, that does not change my conviction about the death penalty."

"That fellow has experienced worse than death," said Renton, with conviction. "He has a good face, Markham. He's a far different type than I had imagined."

"He's one of the educated kind. I've no personal knowledge of what he was once like, but now he's one of the best trusties I have. Of course he's a lifer and will never be pardoned out. Yes, he looks meek as a lamb and gives absolutely no trouble, but you never can tell. If he got outside—well, ex-guards and keepers have been killed before this by ex-convicts with a grudge. And Radcliffe must have some scores to pay off with the bunch that used to run things here."

"Does he still maintain his innocence?"

"Oh, no; the jacket killed that—his old spirit. You can't get a word about it from him now. He's done talking."

"It would be awful," said Renton slowly, "if he were innocent, after all. Markham, do you think it's possible? Tell me, *do* you?"

"Don't let that worry you," replied the other promptly. "Of course the law makes mistakes, but not often. It happens a whole lot in storybooks, but not real life. No, Radcliffe knows in his heart that they got the right man."

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN AMIABLE YOUNG COUPLE.

On the way back to New York, Renton pondered over the day's experiences. He had seen the man responsible for the death of Anthony Allerdyce, he had seen the author of that fiendish crime, and his sole emotion was pity, the most profound pity. And it was not an abstract, academic sort of pity, the triumph of reason and culture like that which had succeeded his youthful hatred and craving for revenge and

upon which he had secretly rather prided himself. Nor was it that time had dimmed the cherished memory of his uncle or rendered less poignant the thought of his terrible death. No, it was the spectacle of John Radcliffe, so different from what he had anticipated. Surely, upon looking at that tragic figure, so piteously old and broken, no one, however wronged, could treasure any feeling but that of pity. Surely the man had expiated his crime. He had shed human blood and he had paid.

But had he shed human blood? The question stabbed Renton like a knife. He had never entertained the suspicion of doubt until that moment—the moment of seeing No. 1312. Supposing—supposing this were one of the infrequent, but monstrous, mistakes of the law? Mistakes for which there is no atonement. For who or what can make whole a broken life, restore the years, wipe out the degradation, the mental and physical suffering? Supposing, after all, John Radcliffe were innocent!

"I must stop thinking such nonsense," thought Renton wearily. "It's absolute skybosh. Why should I, of all people, get such a crazy idea? There isn't the ghost of a reason."

No, there was not; except, perhaps, memory of the look in the dimmed and timid eyes of the old trusty. Yes, it was nonsense, but the thought persisted.

He left the New York Central train at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street, entered a crosstown car, and sat down beside Miss Edna Dent. The discovery was disturbing. He had not seen her for two whole days, not since he had left her house, vowing never to return. Of course he meant to return sooner or later.

"How do you do?" he greeted. "Beautiful evening, is it not?"

"It is not," said Miss Dent. Nor was it. In this instance she proved the more truthful of the two.

They sat elbow to elbow in the crowded car, looking straight in front of them as if it were a concentration contest. Then: "Is your mother quite well?"

"Quite, thank you. By the way, I haven't received your account, Doctor Renton."

"No," said Renton, "you have not."

"When may I expect it?"

"When I send it, Miss Dent." An amiable young couple, this. The silence lasted until they left the car at Broadway.

At the uptown subway station she turned on him. "Will you kindly stop following me?"

"I am not following you. This is my perfectly legitimate way home. I live two stations below you, you know."

"No, I don't know."

"I am desolate." The faintest of twinkles in his eyes did not reassure her.

She walked to the end of the station. He walked, too. She waited for a train to rumble past. He waited, too. Finally she entered one, thought she had eluded him, only to find him occupying the cross seat at her side.

"I still insist it's a beautiful evening," he remarked, with invincible cheerfulness.

"I should think," she said, "you would be ashamed to be seen talking in public with a person of my character." It was meant to be totally crushing, but her features did not lend themselves to sarcasm.

"Not at all," said Renton gallantly. "I'm very broad-minded in that respect."

"I'm always suspicious of broad-minded people."

"Well, you've accused me of being something lower than a police spy. Come, do you think that was fair?"

"Do you think it fair to accuse me of falsehood and complicity in a—a murder?"

"You know I didn't. Let us be reasonable."

"I'm always reasonable. It's you who are not. Why did you not tell me before about what that man said—about his whispering my name?"

"I've told you why. And if I said nothing to Brophy or any one about it, it was simply because I knew very well that if you wished to deny knowledge of the victim is was for some good and sufficient reason, and *not* because you had any guilty knowledge of the crime."

She looked at him carefully. "You are a most amazing person. In one sense you profess the most childlike faith in my mother and me—people you really know nothing about. If you thought we knew the man and denied it, I don't see how you could help thinking also that we had some guilty knowledge of the crime. Wouldn't that be logic?"

"I suppose so; but then, you see, I'm not a logician," confessed Renton. "Why I mentioned the fact at all was simply to save you unnecessary trouble from Brophy. I mean, when a detective starts probing, he often finds out things that are no earthly business of his and which have nothing to do with what he's after. We naturally resent our private life being raked over by alien hands. We have a right to our privacy."

She looked out of the window.

"Besides," he added, "I'm quite aware of the possibility that, though the man evidently knew you, you may not have known him."

"It is not a possibility, but a fact," she said, turning and regarding him earnestly. "I repeat that my mother and I don't know anything about the man or why he was killed. I say he was a total stranger and that we never saw him before. If he knew me—and it certainly would seem so—then I cannot understand or explain it. I hope you can convince Mr. Brophy of this, for I don't wish my mother annoyed with silly and impertinent questions."

"Nor I," said Renton.

They talked of other matters—for this young couple had somehow become truly amiable, though there had been no formal declaration on the subject—and presently Renton asked how she liked her new position.

"Very well, indeed," she replied. "I've been promoted to Mr. Carmody's private office, and I'm getting twenty a week. Think of it! Isn't that a fabulous sum? My first position, and I haven't been there a month! Sometimes I wonder if it can be true." Her face clouded momentarily. "I didn't like displacing Miss Carmichel—she was Mr. Carmody's stenographer, you know. And she had been there so long. I told Mr. Carmody I didn't."

"Didn't what?"

"Didn't want the place if it meant Miss Carmichel's dismissal."

"You haven't much of a business head, I'm afraid," said Renton. But he eyed her with affectionate approval.

"No, I suppose not," she sighed. "Don't think, though, that I haven't a splendidly developed bump of selfishness. I have."

"Oh, yes, I can see it," said Renton. "It's quite a disfigurement."

"I wanted the position," she pursued. "You don't know what it meant—or perhaps you do. But, you see, I'm a coward. I simply couldn't face the thought of doing Miss Carmichel out of her situation."

"That's a novel way of looking at it—in the business world, I mean."

"Oh, but you would have done the same," she protested. "You know you would. No gain or advancement is worth anything if it's won at the cost of another. I don't want you to think me impossibly or hypocritically good. I'm not. It's just that the thought of causing an innocent person suffering—well, I couldn't stand it. It's a form

of cowardice, I suppose, but I was born that way and I can't help it. No money, no matter how I might need it, could compensate for the thought of what Miss Carmichel was suffering. You see, it wasn't as if she were incompetent. I knew through Mr. Brown that there was really no reason for her dismissal."

"This vale of tears would be a happier—and, I suppose, impossible—place if every one were like you," remarked Renton. His eyes were very kind. "You are one of those unfortunate people with a conscience."

"Don't be cynical," she reproved. "And don't make fun of me. I'm to be pitied, not admired. It's not conscience, but a cowardly fear of giving pain. And I think," she finished, her eyes on his, "you're a fellow coward. Otherwise you wouldn't have held back what that man said."

"About knowing an Edna Dent? Oh, that was mere politeness, as I've explained. I'm very polite, you know."

She shook her head. "You are a fellow coward, Doctor Renton. Perhaps that's why I like you."

This was one of her audacious, intimate moments, and during them Renton felt, as when at the bedside of the dying "unknown," he had known this girl from infancy. He never misunderstood her audacity or presumed upon these infrequent moments of intimacy. Perhaps that was another reason why she liked him.

"I'm glad you've confessed to a liking," he said, "even if our only bond is mutual cowardice. But about this Miss Carmichel. What did Mr. Carmody say? Laughed, I suppose?—if he ever does laugh."

"Yes, he laughed, but at first he was very angry. I quite expected to be discharged. I insisted, you see—it amounted to that—that if I took Miss Carmichel's place she wasn't to be turned away."

"Phew!" laughed Renton. "I suppose in another month you'll be running the whole show. I wouldn't call you a coward, Miss Dent. Far from it."

"Why, I see nothing brave in that. The facts were simple. Miss Carmichel should not have been discharged when she had done nothing wrong and was fully qualified to fulfill her duties. And after such long and faithful service, too. And I had the right to refuse the promotion, hadn't I? I simply pointed this out to Mr. Carmody—in a very nice way, of course."

"Well?" encouraged Renton. He was immensely tickled. Her naïveté was so genuine, her ignorance of the business world so profound. And yet with it all she had fine common sense and was nothing if not practical. But she saw nothing astonishing in her ultimatum to her employer, and such a one as Myron Carmody. Renton could imagine the peppery temper of Carmody grappling with such a situation.

"Well," she pursued, in the same simple, serious vein, "Mr. Carmody called me a little fool, but he finally saw the facts as I saw them—as any one would. You see he really hadn't examined them before. He admitted that Miss Carmichel was fully competent in every way, but he said she had certain mannerisms that got on his nerves. Well, I could understand that, especially when he said his nerves weren't all they might be. I pointed out that I might get on his nerves, too, but he laughed and said he would give me a trial, anyway. And Miss Carmichel was transferred to another department at her old salary."

"Well," said Renton, "I don't know whether to congratulate you or Mr. Carmody most. He seems to be a far better sort than I imagined."

"Oh, I couldn't ask for a better employer!" she exclaimed warmly. "I had heard of his temper, but it must have been silly office gossip, for I've never witnessed it. He is kindness itself."

"Indeed!" said Renton. He had grown monosyllabic. Among other things, he was thinking that few men would find it difficult to be "kindness itself" to Edna Dent.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A VISIT AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

"I was passing this way," said Myron Carmody, waving a hand toward the study windows, from which could be seen a large French touring car and a small English chauffeur. "I suppose it's not your custom to receive patients here; but, as I say, I happened to be passing. I wish to consult you professionally. You've been recommended to me by Mr. Brown, my chief clerk, who, I understand, is a personal friend of yours."

Upstairs, at Renton's bedroom window, John Bull was swearing in an undertone at the English chauffeur, perhaps because he thought the latter was making faces at him, whereas, if they somewhat resembled each other, it was due to no effort on the chauffeur's part. He had not made his face himself—that low, receding forehead, flat nose, and undershot jaw. Strange that these features, considered beautiful in a certain species of canine, should be so repulsive in a man. For Carmody's chauffeur was not beautiful, and the scowl with which he regarded the dog at the upper window did not serve to make him more so.

"Nah then, old flat fyce, wot are you a-lookin' at?" he demanded, in a cockney whine, just as if the other could hear and understand. "Tyke your bloòmin' ugly mug aw'y; it reminds me of 'ome. If I 'ad a fyce like that I'd 'ock it."

Carmody looked as Renton had first seen him, apparently in the best of health and condition. But his eyes were tired and never at rest. He spoke jerkily, and there was a slight, curious twitching of the upper lip, as if he had a chronic desire to sneeze.

"Suppose I'm smoking too much," he said. "Can't sleep very well. I've chucked my regular doctor; he's an old fogy, and doesn't do anything but take my money. I believe in young blood and new ideas."

Renton put the usual questions as to habits, diet, et cetera, and gave him a thorough examination, concluding with the eye test.

"You're worrying," he said. "That's all that's wrong with you, but it's enough."

Carmody laughed. "I haven't a worry in the world that I know of. It certainly isn't my business."

"Then it's something else. Perhaps you're worrying too much about your health. You know you can think yourself into almost any ailment. The doctor habit can become as bad as the drug habit."

"I say, there's some truth in that," said Carmody, with the air of one examining a new idea. "I guess I may be worrying too much about my health. How did you know?"

"I didn't. But something's worrying you, and you can't tell me otherwise."

"Well, you've hit it, doc. I never used to worry about my health; never knew I had a stomach or nerves. But, you see, now—well, it's like this," he added, as if elucidating a problem for his own satisfaction: "I've got a lot more to live for than I used to, and I suppose for that reason I've become extra careful of my health—though I never thought about it that way until you suggested it. You can understand the psychology of the thing, eh?"

"Oh, quite," smiled Renton. "It's only when we begin to enjoy life consciously that we know its value and become more careful of it. Or when we're in danger of losing it," he finished, as an afterthought.

"That's it," nodded Carmody. "I don't mind saying my early life wasn't what you'd call a bed of roses. Yet when I hadn't a nickel I never gave a hoot about my health, while now, when I'm just stepping on Easy Street, I begin to get scary that I'll slip up on a banana peel and break my neck. Afraid I won't live to enjoy my new prosperity, see? Funny, isn't it?"

"It's what's the matter with half our rich men," said Renton. "They waste their health trying to get money, and then waste their money trying to get health. Your health is all right, but you'll lose it if you don't forget about it. I needn't advise a change of scene or occupation, for you really don't need it, and we carry the same old self wherever we go. Live sanely and focus your mind on something else but your health."

Carmody rose. "I feel you've done me a lot of good already," he said, with a laugh. "You could have talked a lot of learned bosh and made me feel I was due for the obituary column if I didn't pay up handsome in more ways than one. Yes, I've had experience of doctors, and, to tell you the truth, I expected the same old game from you.

"Fine old place, this," he said conversationally, looking about the room. "Not many left of them in this country. I'll bet it has a history, eh?" And Renton, whose weakness was the old house, found himself presently conducting the other over the ground floor and pointing out its historic treasures.

Carmody proved an intelligent and appreciative audience, if somewhat crude. "So this is the Renton mansion?" he exclaimed. "I've seen write-ups in the Sunday papers about it, but I never connected it with you. Aren't you afraid to have all those things lying about? They should be worth something. I suppose, though, you've an elaborate system of burglar alarms."

Renton laughed. "No, not one. I've never had a visit from burglars. You see, these things, though valuable, would be hard to dispose of, and they aren't the sort of stuff your professional cracksman goes after."

"Well, this is my idea of a house, all right," pursued Carmody, looking about him critically. "I've no use for these modern abominations, cheap imitations of Swiss châlets, Queen Anne villas, and these silly pagodas." He probably meant pergolas. "No, sir, none of that for me. I'm going to build some day, and it's going to be a place like this —a real American house, and none of your foreign fandangos."

They returned to the study, where Carmody held forth for some time further on architecture—his favorite hobby, it seemed—and his dream of building some day a "real American house." Renton listened politely, but perfunctorily. He was becoming somewhat bored, and welcomed the intrusion of Peter.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the old manservant, in his customary, sepulchral whisper, as if officiating at a funeral, "but Jules asked me to give you this. He found it just now, when he was cleaning the coupé, sir. It had worked down between the cushions——"

"Oh, all right," said Renton, pocketing carelessly the cheap fountain pen. "A souvenir of that Highbridge murder," he explained, with a smile, to his visitor.

"The Highbridge murder? Oh, that's so, you're the doctor who found the unfortunate man. I remember Mr. Brown mentioning the fact. Heard if they ever did anything about it?"

"No, I haven't. It seems a hopeless case."

"The police department is rotten," remarked Carmody, with conviction. "They couldn't find an elephant if it was sleeping on them."

He shook Renton warmly by the hand. "If you don't mind," he said,

"I'd like to drop in here if ever I'm up this way again. Might get some ideas for my new house. I love this old place. And somehow it does me good just to talk to you. You've got the right dope, and I'll take your advice. I'll cut out the worrying game."

The visit left Renton in a reverie. Myron Carmody was crude, in a sense, but human. There was something very human in his talk about the house he expected to build, and his outspoken statement that now when his circumstances were becoming affluent he was afraid he might not live to enjoy them. Already, it would seem, wealth was bringing its attendant potential evils, and he wondered if Carmody, after attaining that financial prosperity for which evidently he had struggled hard all his life, was finding himself at heart any happier than when he hadn't a "nickel."

The entrance of Detective Brophy, whom he had not seen for three days, put an end to his musings.

"Whatever aversion Mrs. Dent had or has to publicity," said Renton, giving the substance of his recent conversation with Edna Dent, "it has absolutely nothing to do with this affair. You may bank on that."

Brophy stuck his thumbs in the armholes of his vest and looked at his feet in cryptic fashion. "I knew you'd been keeping something back," he said, with a reproachful shake of the head. "So the fellow knew an Edna Dent—of course, this same party? That's what took him up in that neighborhood. She said he acted lost, like. He was looking for her house, see?"

"It's possible. But if he knew her, she didn't know him."

"Well, we'll say a total stranger," conceded Brophy. "A stranger who had some important business with her—important enough to make another guy short circuit him. And it was something, we'll say, she knows nothing about. Now what could it have been?"

Renton shrugged. "Obviously money or the secret of a gold mine left them by a forgotten, forgiving relative—only they have no relatives. When we find out what took the man to the neighborhood, I guess we'll have found out everything."

"Now you're whistling," agreed the other. "A lead—that's all I'm looking for. There don't seem to be anybody who knew this old gobbler. We're trying Chicago, of course, but that Bloch firm's a wholesale house and his clothes may have passed through half a dozen hands before he bought 'em. Why in thunder don't somebody step forward and identify him? We've had his picture in the papers. What more do they want? I wonder what his line was. He never worked much with his hands."

It was the following evening that Renton, on reaching home, found that Carmody had called during his absence.

"It seems he's lost a diamond ring, sir," explained Peter, "and he thought he might have left it here. May I ask if you know anything about the gentleman, sir? If you don't mind my saying so, he acted in what I would call a very suspicious manner. Very suspicious indeed."

Now Peter was an old and privileged servant, and his love for the Renton mansion and all pertaining to it could not be measured in dollars and cents. His self-appointed mission in life was to guard jealously the historic treasures intrusted to his immediate care, and his attitude toward every visitor, however well he might know them, was that of respectful suspicion. He seemed to think the universe leagued in a conspiracy to loot the Renton mansion, and that nothing had ever happened during his twenty years' service to support remotely this belief only made him the more certain of it. He was quite

satisfied such an attempt would be made some day, and he was forever trying to convince his master of the necessity of burglar alarms and a handy arsenal of weapons. In short, for a visitor to act in a "very suspicious manner indeed" was Peter's favorite criticism, and only to be expected; therefore, Renton received it on this occasion with his customary equanimity.

"What did Mr. Carmody do, Peter? Did you catch him trying to put Dolly Madison's writing desk in his breeches pocket?"

"I caught him at *your* desk, sir," said Peter, impervious to all levity and as if announcing the crack of doom. Yet he exuded a discreet and solemn satisfaction which seemed to say: "I knew I'd land one in the long run, and, you see, I have. All visitors are potential thieves."

Renton swung round in his chair. "My desk—here in the study?"

"Yes, sir. He insisted on having a look for his ring, which, if I may say so, sir, I don't believe he ever lost——"

"You've no right to say that, Peter. But go on."

"Well, sir, he insisted on looking in here. Of course I came with him, keeping a very sharp eye peeled, you may be sure. He hunted around for a while with me at his heels. Then there came a ring at the bell. 'That's my chauffeur,' says he, looking out of the window. 'See what he wants.' I stepped into the hall, but I'd no intention of answering the door. I just wanted to see what Mr. Carmody would do. So I tiptoed back quickly, and there he was at your desk, sir. He must be very quick on his feet for such a big man, for he came all the way from the window in that little time——"

"What was he doing at the desk?"

"He had the middle drawer open, and had started to rummage about in it. Then he looked up and saw me standing there watching him. Was he put out? Not a bit of it, sir. He smiles and says: 'I thought perhaps your master had found it and put it in here. But I see it's nowhere about. I must have lost it somewhere else.'"

Renton thanked and dismissed the old servant without comment, for he knew it would be quite useless to try and convince him of Carmody's innocent intentions. Assuredly the story of the lost ring must be authentic, as otherwise what possible reason could Myron Carmody have for going to the desk? He lacked what Peter called "form," and evidently did not regard such an action as a heinous offense against good manners.

Still, Peter's story, for all his attempted light dismissal, set Renton to thinking deeply. If the tale of the lost ring were a myth, concocted for the purpose, what could Carmody have wanted at the desk? The impossibility of answering this showed perhaps its absurdity. Yet another question forced itself on Renton's mind. Had Carmody's visit the previous evening been induced solely by the desire to consult him professionally?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### COINCIDENCE.

She had called him a coward, a coward in the sense that she herself claimed to be one—the fear of causing pain. It was a true indictment.

Yes, he was a rank sentimentalist. A good percentage of his practice was conducted on sentimental lines and never brought in a penny. He was paid in the more lasting coin of gratitude—sometimes not even that. He had given decent burial to the unknown victim of the Highbridge murder, another piece of sentiment, which, if asked, Renton would have been quite unable to explain. Perhaps the man's gray hairs, some fancied like-

ness, the tragedy of the violent and lonely death, appealed to him. His father had left him a comfortable income, augmented on the demise of Anthony Allerdyce, and so he could afford to indulge these whims of sentiment.

He could quite understand and sympathize with Edna Dent's feelings about displacing Miss Carmichel, for he himself would have been guilty of just such a proceeding. But she was far younger than he, and youth, in general, is selfish and thoughtless of others. What experience had given her such maturity of mind and heart? She had suffered, of course—he had seen that from the first—but in what particular way?

He himself was almost morbidly sensitive to suffering in others; else why should he think so constantly of the man serving a life sentence for the murder of Anthony Allerdyce? The old trusty's eyes still haunted him, and he mentioned the fact in a letter to Markham:

> Somehow I can't get the face of No. 1312, as I saw it there in the library, out of my head. I wonder what he would have said had he known I was Anthony Allerdyce's nephew? Of course you will laugh, but I cannot dismiss the thought that he may be the victim of a monstrous wrong. I have tried, but for some inexplicable reason the thought persists. I wonder if he could be induced to talk of the affair. I would like to hear his version. I never knew the exact details, but I intend hunting them up in the back files of the press.

Markham wrote back:

> For Heaven's sake, don't be a fool! The man's guilty, and he knows it. But of course he'll still say he's innocent if he sees a possible chance of getting out. It would be strange if he found a champion in the nephew of the man he killed. Read up on the evidence in the case before you abandon yourself to this orgy of sentimentality, which could be used much better somewhere else. I see you're still busy with theories for an imaginary world. Come to earth, and, for the love of Mike, don't make my job here any harder than it is. Dirt and sentimentalism make half the trouble in life.

Renton laughed as he pocketed the letter. It was one of Markham's amiable delusions that he was a particularly stony-hearted member of society, but the pose deceived no one but himself.

It was in the *Herald* office that Renton looked up the Allerdyce affair, following it patiently through its various stages from the discovery of the crime to John Radcliffe's trial and sentence. Many facts he had known, but there were some he did not know, and he read this ancient history with warring emotions. Stated briefly, the facts were these:

Anthony Allerdyce was president of a bank in a suburb of Albany, and John Radcliffe a lineman in the local telephone company. Allerdyce, who occasionally worked alone and late at the bank, was surprised one night by two masked men and forced, under torture, to open the safe. Ten thousand dollars in cash was taken.

Radcliffe was caught virtually redhanded by the policeman on beat, and Allerdyce, who succumbed to his injuries that night, identified him as one of his assailants. A burglar's kit and over one thousand dollars were found on Radcliffe, who, it was shown, had been discharged from the telephone company and was unable to find work. He had a wife and child, and was known to be in desperate need of money. He was a turbulent sort of fellow, it seems, hasty of temper, fond of fighting, and always aggressively jealous of what he called his rights. Otherwise his record was good.

Radcliffe admitted that, made desperate by the illness of his child and being unable to find work, he had meant to rob the bank if he could. He had gone there that night with the intention only to find Allerdyce lying unconscious and the safe rifled. He also

claimed that the several large bills found on him had been dropped by the thieves in their haste, and that he meant to profit by their oversight.

"Yes," he said under examination, "I meant to keep them and say nothing. The bank was robbed, anyway, and I needed the money. Those fellows got away with ten thousand; the thousand I found and meant to keep was part of their haul, therefore I was taking it from them and not the bank."

It was ingenious reasoning, but hardly sound. Nor would it seem that Radcliffe believed it himself or that he suffered from moral astigmatism. For later he railed at society for denying him a living, and declared he would commit a dozen robberies if it meant saving his child. It may be imagined he was desperate by this time and did not care what he said. In the main, however, the public thought he played up his wife and sick child too strong; there was little if any sympathy for him as the fiendish and cold-blooded cruelty practiced on old Allerdyce had roused people to the lynching pitch. Besides, Radcliffe had never been popular. It seems he was a good deal of a disturbing element wherever he went.

Anthony Allerdyce's identification of Radcliffe was riddled by the latter's clever young lawyer. Allerdyce, he claimed, was in no condition to give a reliable ante-mortem statement. Moreover, he said his assailants were masked. A mask was found on Radcliffe, but if he had worn it, how could he be identified? There is no doubt, however, that the ante-mortem statement was but a small and insignificant link in the chain of evidence; alone, it was trifling, but the whole chain could not be broken. On his own testimony, Radcliffe was a thief, and, even if his story were true, he was saved only from a greater robbery and possibly murder by the mere fact of being forestalled. His claim that he did not know Allerdyce was working late in the bank and would not have attempted violence under any circumstances was received with due skepticism. He was adjudged guilty, and though the authorities did their utmost to get from him the identity of his accomplice, who escaped with the bulk of the "swag," he maintained to the last that he had no accomplice.

Such is the mere skeleton of the Allerdyce affair, which, ten years back, set the whole country talking.

On the day that Renton had finished reading it up in the back files of the *Herald*, he learned from Brophy that the unknown victim of the Highbridge murder had been identified at last. His name, it seemed, was Elijah Hoskins, and his vocation that of evangelist.

"Evangelist?" exclaimed Renton. "I never heard of an evangelist being murdered except by cannibals."

"Can't help it," replied Brophy. "He was an evangelist, all right, and known as 'Praying Lije.' He came from Chicago."

This simple statement did not reveal the wealth of patient and intelligent effort put forth by various police departments throughout the country. For no one had come forward to identify Elijah Hoskins and proclaim his name.

"We finally got him through that coat tab," explained Brophy, "and it was some job, believe me!"

"Well?" asked Renton eagerly.

The other shrugged. "We've dug up his past, but there ain't anything in it that would go to show he was ever mixed up in anything crooked. He was a harmless old gobbler, and some thought him a bit cracked. He got religion strong after quitting business, and went into the soul-saving game on his own hook. He didn't belong to any church or missionary organization, and he hadn't a relative or

close friend in the world. That's why he wasn't identified. And he wasn't well known either, like Billy Sunday or any of these fellows. He went about the country, preaching on street corners and wherever he could find a crowd, paying his expenses out of his own pocket. A fellow who does that must have religion strong, eh? Now will you tell me," finished Brophy gloomily, "where a party like that fits into the game? And yet he's got to fit somewhere."

"Were you able to follow his movements here in New York?"

"No. You see, he only come in from Liverpool the day he was killed. We've found he left Chicago last October for Europe—I suppose to register a personal kick about this rotten war—and he was a second-cabin passenger on one of those boats that was blown sky high—the *Arctic*."

"The *Arctic?* That's—that's funny."

"I don't get you," said Brophy politely.

"Why, I mean it's a coincidence. You see, this Mr. Carmody, Miss Dent's employer, was a passenger, too. I wonder if he could have known this Elijah Hoskins."

"Not if he went first class. The two cabins don't mix. And wouldn't he have seen Hoskins' picture in the papers and come forward and identified him? Sure he would."

"Some press photos aren't remarkable for their excellence, Brophy, and this one was taken when Hoskins was a corpse. Countless others who must have seen him at one time didn't come forward and identify him, either. Don't forget that."

"Somebody has come forward and as good as identified him," replied the detective. "I'll tell you about it later. The main thing is that Mr. Carmody couldn't tell us anything about Hoskins that we don't know. He got a broken head and a dose of double pneumonia out of the *Arctic* business, and he was laid up in a Welsh hospital——"

"Welsh? The *Arctic* went down near Kinsale."

"I know, but, you see, Hoskins wasn't among the regular survivors. He was blown on to a hatch or something, and drifted about St. George's Channel until picked up by a boat out of St. Davids. His escape was the kind you read about. He was off his nut, and they didn't know who he was—nor he, either. His name never figured in the list of survivors, for there was no one to keep making inquiries, no one who cared a hang about him, see? We got all this through Scotland Yard."

"Well, then, what happened to him?" asked Renton, keenly interested in the story of this strange character whose life, through weaving of the wonderful web of fate, had become connected in a manner with his own.

"Well," pursued Brophy, "he left the hospital in February. I told you he'd always been considered a bit off, and that knock on the head and what he come through didn't seem to help him any. I don't mean he was crazy, understand, but his think tank was just a bit dented. They say he had spells when he appeared to forget everything, and the last heard of him after leaving St. Davids was that he'd joined a band of gypsies, traveling with them all over Wales. You know folks like gypsies are very kind to those they think a bit cracked, and Hoskins was looked on as a sort of prophet, I guess. Well, the next trace we have of him is when he turns up here as a second-cabin passenger aboard the *St. Paul.* He was killed the night of his arrival in New York."

"And you can't trace his movements after leaving the boat?"

"You've said it," replied Brophy. "Nobody knew anything about him, and the only way we know it was

him is from his name and description. But one person came forward yesterday and says he thinks he saw him, though I don't put any stock in it. This is the person I was telling you about, and it goes to show that picture in the papers wasn't so awful worse at that. This fellow's a bell boy, and bell boys, take it from me, are always trying to figure in sensational news. So I don't put any stock in his story."

"What is it?"

"Why, he works at the Belvedere, on Riverside Drive, and he says that a party looking like Hoskins went up in the elevator a couple of weeks ago. He don't remember the date, but that would make it around the day Hoskins landed and was killed."

"Does he remember this man, who he thinks resembled Hoskins, asking for any one in the building?"

Brophy shook his head. "He didn't ask for any one. He just went up in the car and got off at the third floor. What's the matter?"

For Renton had risen and was looking rather strange. "Why," he said, "just another coincidence. This Myron Carmody lives in the Belvedere—on the third floor. I've called on him there."

There was silence, the two eying each other a moment. "Humph," grunted Brophy, transferring his gaze to the fire. Then he swung round suddenly. "Say, who is this Myron Carmody?"

"President of the Continental Motor Company——"

"I know that. But what was he before?"

"Ask me another one," replied Renton.

"And you say he called on you here the other day? For what?"

"Professional advice. I've only called once at the Belvedere, for, you see, there's really nothing the matter with him."

"And how often has he been here?"

"Oh, just the once. No, I remember he came the following day. But I wasn't in. He'd lost a diamond ring and thought it might be here."

"Did he find it?"

"Yes; not here, but in his own home." Renton did not mention the desk incident, considering that to do so would be petty and unworthy.

Brophy's pale-blue eyes were contracted in painful thought. At this moment he was in danger of achieving a stupendous inspiration. But the "connection" eluded him, scorning as he did to jump at conclusions which lacked all logic. At the same time he meant to direct his attention to this new quarter—Myron Carmody—for no "lead," however seemingly trivial, could afford to be ignored.

But, as usual, he said nothing of his intention to Renton.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A CRYPTIC DIALOGUE AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

Some philosophers have claimed that forty-five is the age of recklessness with many men; that, as if conscious of having passed the summit of the hill of life and begun the long descent into that valley where lies inevitable decay and death, they attempt to defy destiny and deceive themselves by acting like hot-blooded twenty. There are other reasons, however; one may be a lack of opportunity in early life to sow those wild oats which, if sown at all, are better got rid of in youth. There is still another reason—finding oneself in a situation that can be met with only by recklessness whether one is forty-five or twenty. None of these reasons may have had anything to do with Myron Carmody's actions, but the fact remains that he was forty-five—and reckless.

It showed in his face now as he paced the study floor of his ornate bachelor

apartments on Riverside Drive—a "queer step up from porridge," as the Scotch would say, from the boarding house he inhabited prior to the war boom in Continental Motors.

In a corner of this ornate room sat a not very ornate object—the Carmody chauffeur, he of the antediluvian lower jaw and rudimentary nose. His surname was May, and at some remote period he had acquired the nickname of "Birdie," how or why was a mystery, for the only species he resembled was that variety known as the jailbird. Perhaps, though a stranger to the police on this side of the Atlantic, he had sampled some of his native English prisons, and that was the reason he so strongly objected to being reminded of home. Home evidently had no pleasant memories for him, and he had shaken the dust of London from his feet over a dozen years ago; but he could not shake his accent, like which, happily, there is none other in the world.

Presumably, Myron Carmody had a weakness toward this employee—such as he had suddenly evinced toward Miss Dent—for things had gone very well indeed with Birdie May since the business began to flourish. His salary would have made covetous the most ambitious chauffeur that ever robbed an employer, but Mr. May was a modest gentleman and did not advertise his prosperity at the corner saloon or by decorating his barrellike chest with diamonds. It may be presumed that he merited his salary, for he was a first-class mechanic, his knowledge extending even to those tools upon which the police look with cold disfavor and suspicion.

Moreover, it would seem that Birdie had other qualities, qualities of the heart and mind, that endeared themselves to Carmody and caused him to treat the other as an equal when they were alone. Yet Carmody remained the master, but in no sense was this due to his apparent social superiority. It was the dominion of the superior mind, that superior innate force which had raised him to the head of the Continental Motor Company, while the height of Birdie May's ambition and ability was represented by visions of a flourishing "pub."

"He must have it on him," Carmody was now saying as he paced the room. "And we must get it without any more delay. And to think," he finished, with an oath, "that it was there all the time! The cursed irony of it! We had our hands on it and didn't know!"

"'Ere nah," remonstrated May, looking with some concern at the other's febrile eyes and twitching lips, "it don't do no good 'arping on that bloomin' string. Thinking o' wot might 'ave been is enough to put a guy in the booby hatch—and that's where you'll be, guvnor, if you don't tyke a bryce."

Carmody muttered, looked at himself guiltily in a mirror, and made an effort at composure. "You're one of the best, Birdie," he said, looking at the other with mingled affection and contempt. "Never a whine for the mess I've got into, though it may lead to your finish, too. Why don't you cut out when the cutting's good?"

"'Ere nah," remonstrated the other in a pained voice. It was his favorite expression, and, employed with various inflections, could do duty as a complete vocabulary.

"The cursed needlessness of the whole thing!" exclaimed Carmody, apostrophizing the ceiling. "That's what's eating into me—into the bone. If I only hadn't lost my nerve and acted like a cursed fool!"

"Still 'arping," protested Mr. May, with a shake of his round head. "Nah then, quit it, guvnor. Why, I might 'ave went and done the very same bloomin' think myself. It ain't 'ow you got into it wot matters, but 'ow

to get out of it. Nah there's no use getting into a funk for nothink. In the first plyce this idea o' yours is all a guess and only a guess——"

"I'm sure of it," exclaimed Carmody. "There's no use arguing over that part of it. Credit me with a little intelligence. Where else could it be? Hoskins had it when he left here—perhaps another mistake of mine that I ever let him. Only"—casting his burning eyes about the room—"this is hardly the place to pull off anything like that."

"Not unless you was a fool," agreed Birdie heartily. "Nothink to blame yourself abaht there. You done right, guvnor. And coming on you sudden like that, too!"

"Well, then, he had no time nor opportunity to put it anywhere else," continued Carmody. "You see that, don't you? It couldn't vanish into thin air. My explanation is the only possible one. He was slicker than we thought."

Birdie blew smoke in silence. "Well, nothink may ever come of it, guvnor," he consoled at length. "No use lookin' on the dark side."

"But we can't take any chances! Every day, every minute increases the risk. Don't you see that? Something must be done. I—I can't stand it much longer. Anything is better than this suspense."

"'Ere nah. Well, 'ow abaht crackin' the crib?" asked Mr. May, with a businesslike air.

Carmody nodded. "It may be there. I hadn't time for more than a look round, thanks to that cursed servant. Suspicious old beast!"

"He'll tell 'im you was at the desk."

"Oh, of course. Renton, however, hasn't mentioned it to me. He has dismissed it, you see, as the action of a poor benighted climber who didn't know any better. One who isn't supposed to know anything about this high-society game. Besides he has no reason to suspect anything. He's a fool, Birdie; one of these stuck-up rah-rah boys, all family and money and nothing else. He was being coddled while you and I were trying to scrape a living from the gutter. I hate that blasted sort! Doctor? I wouldn't have him for a sick pup."

Birdie grinned. "'E fell for it, all right."

"All over himself," nodded Carmody, smiling for the first time. "He spotted I was worried—I'll admit he got the right dope there—but he didn't know why. Wonder what he'd have said if he'd only known. You should have heard him talk of his rotten old place. Why, you'd think it was the White House. I wouldn't take a present of the junk. But of course I said it was the finest place in the world. It tickled him immensely. He'd talk to a wooden cigar Indian about that house of his. And I'm going to build one just like it!"

Birdie joined in the laugh, pleased that the "guvnor" was in a better humor. Then he took from his pocket a rough but remarkably accurate sketch of the ground floor of the Renton mansion, material for which had been gained by Carmody's visit.

"If he hasn't it on him, it should be in that desk in the study," said Carmody, leaning over the other's shoulder and pointing a stubby finger at the map.

"'Ow abaht the dorg, guvnor?"

"He's a joke," dismissed Carmody. "Sleeps upstairs. One of these coddled, stuffed images like his master. I guess they never let him downstairs; might be lost or stolen, see? Too valuable for any good use, like all these prize mutts."

"And not a bloomin' burglar alarm," chuckled Birdie. "It's pie, guvnor. When do we pull it orf?"

"Not until we know positively he hasn't it on him. And that means——"

"Right-o!" said Birdie, with every manifestation of delight.

All of which may explain the second mysterious assault which, if not actually in the Highbridge precinct, occurred very near it and, therefore caused Brophy's "Old Man" further vexation.

For on the evening following the recorded and somewhat cryptic dialogue between Carmody and May, Renton was knocked unconscious as he was about to enter his home. He never knew what hit him, for the figure that emerged from the hedge fronting the premises moved with the silence and stealth of some predatory animal, striking from the rear. It was all over in a moment, and even in a more populous neighborhood and at an earlier hour would have escaped observation.

Renton was hardly the "stuffed image" Carmody supposed, but in this affair, being totally unsuspicious and lacking the slightest warning, his rôle was little better than one. He lay where he fell, at the foot of the steps, until the extraordinary behavior of the bulldog, whining at the front door and then running back into the butler's pantry and laying siege to Peter, prompted the latter to investigate.

Renton's derby hat probably saved him from serious injury, for the blow had been a vicious one. He escaped, however, with a scalp wound, which to one of his physique and constitution proved of little consequence. He had suffered worse injuries in the name of sport, and that same night found him calmly discussing the affair with Brophy, to whom he had phoned.

"Another common garden variety of holdup," he explained. "They got me for everything I carried. Went through me like an east wind. Looks as if our theory was all wrong and headquarters right, eh?" He spoke lightly, but there was a new glint in his eye, for his blood was up in more ways than one.

Brophy gazed upon his feet, and said nothing. Being only a plodding, human, everyday sort of detective, he failed to see in a sudden burst of inexplicable intuition the Carmody-May hand in this second affair. Indeed he had never heard of the gentleman with the antediluvian lower jaw, and knew of Carmody simply as Miss Dent's employer. Nor was Renton himself given to spasms of uncanny clairvoyance. Yet neither man was a fool, and their thoughts had taken a certain bent, though neither had said anything to the other.

"Yes," said Brophy at length, "it looks as if our theory was up in the air all right. Even saying the same party turned both tricks, what reason, if not robbery, would he have for landing on you?"

"Tell me and I'll tell you," replied Renton. "I haven't a known enemy in the world. And I haven't seen any one following me or anything like that."

"Still, there's a connection," replied the other. "You were in at the death of Hoskins. Maybe they think you learned something from him that would give them trouble."

"If I had, would I have waited all this time? I learned nothing from Hoskins. What would be my object in keeping silent? For goodness' sake, Brophy, don't get the idea that I know who killed Hoskins and am holding it back. That's piffle."

"Don't mind what I say," replied the detective. "I'm only groping. You see, there's got to be a connection somewhere if there's anything in our theory."

"I'm afraid there's nothing in it. I can't make head nor tail of it."

Brophy spread his square toes to the fire and hooked his thumbs in the armholes of his vest—a characteristic atti-

tude when about to disseminate wisdom and instruction. "I've been looking up your friends, the Dents," he said.

"So you weren't satisfied with what I told you?"

"Oh, I haven't been bothering them; there's other ways of getting information. I wouldn't worry Miss Dent for the world. But I've got a line on her father."

"Her father! What are you talking about? I told you he was dead, didn't I? He's been dead for years."

"Yes?" said Brophy mildly. "Well, mebbe that's one way of putting it. He's doing a life stretch for the murder of Anthony Allerdyce. Their real name is Radcliffe, see?"

## CHAPTER X.

### BROPHY PAYS A CALL.

Renton, after a moment's fatuous staring, got off his chair suddenly, only to sit down as suddenly. To discover that one's potential father-in-law, instead of filling an honored grave, is serving a sentence for murder comes as something of a shock even to the most democratic soul. But to learn that that same potential father-in-law is the gentleman found guilty of perpetrating a cold-blooded murder on the person of one's favorite and beloved relative is decidedly something more than a shock.

"Mebbe you don't remember the case," said Brophy, misinterpreting Renton's "lost" expression. "It happened in Albany ten years back——"

"Remember it?" burst out Renton. "I've been trying to forget it for ten years! Anthony Allerdyce was my uncle."

"Phew!" said Brophy, and eyed his feet. It was not often he was astonished. "Of course it didn't happen in my town," he added as if apologizing for the fact that he hadn't known Renton's relationship to the victim. "You weren't living here, either."

"No, I was in Germany. It wasn't a subject I ever cared to talk about with any one. Of course you're sure of your facts?"

"Nothing surer. The Radcliffes came here after the trial, and have been living in different parts of the city. Changed their name, I suppose, because the other might have stood in the way of the girl getting a job. Of course Mrs. Radcliffe could have got a divorce. I don't see why she didn't."

"Because evidently she still loves her husband. Because it's possible she doesn't believe in his guilt."

"Yes," said Brophy, "some women can believe anything. But the question is, had the Allerdyce affair anything to do with the killing of Hoskins? I'm looking all round this thing, and I'm not satisfied that it hadn't. It would surprise you the connection there is sometimes between widely separate crimes. And there's a connection here—that Hoskins knew the Radcliffes."

"But the name he mentioned was Dent—Edna Dent—so he couldn't have known their right name or anything of their past."

"Why not? If he was a friend, he wouldn't give their right name away, seeing they didn't want it known. And they're known as Dent; he'd have to ask for that name if he was looking for the house, wouldn't he?"

"Do you think John Radcliffe knew Hoskins?"

Brophy shrugged. "I've seen Radcliffe. I was up there to-day, and I showed him the picture we took of Hoskins. He says he don't know him from Adam's off ox. I don't see what his object would be in lying, but of course he may have been." This was a characteristic Brophy qualification about anybody.

"Do the Dents—Radcliffes—know what you've found out?"

"No. I feel real sorry for them, and I didn't see what good it would do

telling it all over. When you try to keep the world from knowing anything about you it generally ends up with it finding out too much."

Renton nodded. "I warned Miss Radcliffe of that. At least I tried to, but I don't know if she understood. Brophy, you'll keep this under your hat? You won't say anything unless you have to?"

"That's a promise," replied the other. "I'm not figuring on queering Miss Radcliffe where she works. With some employers, you know, it wouldn't do her any good."

"This is the mystery of their life, the skeleton in the closet which I always knew was there," pursued Renton. "It's the reason Mrs. Radcliffe—I may as well call her that to you—was so averse to publicity. I can understand now the look on her face that night when I said it was a case of murder. She didn't want the man brought into her house because it would mean publicity and the possible discovery of their secret. So, you see, they weren't trying to shield the murderer or anything like that. It's just as I told you from the first—they know nothing."

"And yet Hoskins knew an Edna Dent," said Brophy. "Where's the connection? Hoskins wasn't an old crook, either, for every gallery in the country's been searched. If he was a crook, he'd never been mugged. If he was a crook, he must have lived a double life that nobody knew about. Besides, we can't find any trace of him in Albany; he was never east of Chicago until he took that trip to Europe."

"Have you asked Mr. Carmody if he met him on the *Arctic?* You might find out something."

"Well, it won't do any harm to ask," admitted Brophy.

Thus it came about that Detective Brophy paid a visit to Carmody & Co., and for the first time engaged in conversation the man about whom he had been pursuing inquiries.

Those inquiries had yielded the fact that Myron Carmody had been born virtually in a San Francisco gutter. He had sold newspapers, done any honest job that came to hand, attended night school, and at the age of twenty-five was working as a mechanic in a San Francisco garage. Then he had gone East. Ten years later, with a small cash capital of eight thousand dollars or so, he bought an interest in the Continental Motor Company. At that time it was a small concern, owning a different name and on the verge of insolvency. Carmody, however, was not dismayed; he had a good practical knowledge of the business, no little store of education, which he was adding to by study, and he was not afraid of hard work. Still, it was an uphill fight—such a fight as perhaps Carmody alone knew. The firm turned out a good car, but competition was keen and they lacked capital. It was not until the great war, when orders from the British government began rolling in, that Carmody could claim a success for his enterprise. Throughout this period of ten years an English mechanic by the name of May had remained in Carmody's employment, first as a worker in the machine shop and latterly as his chauffeur. Carmody spoke very highly of him.

This was the sum of what Brophy had learned, and so far as he could discover there was not one incident in the life of Myron Carmody which would not bear the strictest investigation. Indeed, his was a record any man might be proud of, a struggle and triumph against heavy odds. Brophy felt a solid admiration for the man.

It has been seen that Brophy had no reason to suspect Carmody, and he had conducted his inquiry into the other's past purely as a matter of routine and with no belief other than that

he would draw blank. And he had drawn blank. The mere coincidence of being a fellow passenger of Elijah Hoskins on the ill-fated *Arctic* and of living on the third floor of the Belvedere apartments was hardly sufficient evidence to suspect a person of murder. Besides, Brophy scouted the bell boy's story. Thus he came to Carmody, not with suspicion, but in the vague hope that he might learn some new and important fact about Hoskins.

Miss Dent was typing industriously when the office boy brought in Michael Brophy's name and business. Her back was presented to Carmody, but a small mirror hung near her table in which, by glancing up obliquely, she could see her employer's face. She had had no hand in the placing of this small mirror in such a position, nor had Carmody. Indeed, the latter was ignorant that his every movement could be seen from this angle, and Miss Dent had herself discovered the fact quite inadvertently. From that moment she never glanced in the mirror if she could help it, feeling it was akin to spying.

Why she did so now she could not say. Perhaps it was the inflection of Carmody's voice as he exclaimed: "A detective?" Then he added angrily: "Tell him I'm busy. I've no time to waste. Well, what does he want?"

"He says it's about a party named Hoskins, sir."

In the mirror Miss Dent saw Carmody's hand, hidden by his desk from the office boy, clench suddenly. Also, he had lost color, and his jaw had set grimly. He spoke, however, with admirable composure. "I don't know any one by that name, but show this Mr. Brophy in."

When the boy had gone, Miss Dent saw Carmody produce his handkerchief furtively and wipe his forehead. His face was still pale, his expression set and grim. She noted these facts without attempting to guess their cause, for she was considerably disturbed herself. She wondered if this Detective Brophy were the one Renton had mentioned, the one she knew by sight and who had asked her mother and herself several routine questions at the time of the Highbridge murder.

Miss Dent's desk faced the door; also, Brophy, though aware she was employed by Carmody & Co., had no idea she had been promoted to Carmody's private office. Therefore, when he opened the door, marched in, and came suddenly face to face with her, he was taken by surprise, and didn't know whether to bow or pass without a sign of recognition. Nor did she. Like Carmody, but in a far different sense, she feared this visit of the detective; like Carmody, she had something to hide and was afraid it might be revealed. Stolid, unimaginative Brophy was the innocent one of the three.

The girl dropped her eyes swiftly, and Brophy passed on, but Carmody had seen the momentary tableau and drawn his own conclusions, the inevitable conclusions of a guilty mind. But there was no fear, no hint of guilt in his face or manner when he greeted Brophy, in fact rather more than his usual quantity of aggressiveness.

"Well, sir," he said sharply, looking the other straight in the eyes, "what can I do for *you?*"

It must have been with considerable relief that Carmody listened to Brophy's business, stated in a brief but thoroughly respectful manner. This was different from being invited to encircle one's wrists with a pair of "nippers," and the desk drawer, so conveniently at hand, which contained a loaded automatic pistol, was no longer thought of. Michael Brophy, during his career, had experienced many narrow escapes from death, but possibly he was never nearer to it than during his first moments in this highly respect-

able and prosperous Broadway business office. His life had hung on the first words he happened to speak, for Carmody, it has been intimated, was reckless. Happily Mr. Brophy knew nothing of his momentary juxtaposition with the Grim Skeleton, nor, to, give him his due, would that knowledge have upset him greatly.

"You say this man Hoskins was the victim in that Highbridge holdup and murder?" Carmody was saying. "Also that he was a passenger on the *Arctic* —a second-cabin passenger? No, I never heard of him. The two cabins don't mix."

"I know that, sir," replied Brophy, "but this Hoskins, being an evangelist and such an odd character, I thought perhaps he might have impressed himself on you by holding service or something like that, see? And then, sir, after the ship was first hit and you knew you were all booked for Davy Jones' locker, there wasn't no such thing as different classes, was there? From all accounts there was a good bit of a panic."

"Well, in a sense," said Carmody, studying his cigar, "I suppose everybody did mix more or less. I haven't any very clear recollection. You see, we didn't stop at the warning gun, and when they found the first torpedo hadn't done for us, they turned loose their small disappearing guns. Every lifeboat was either swamped or smashed to kindling. There was no chance of escape, and so we had to wait there like sheep until, seeing their gunfire was too slow to do the trick, they had to go to the expense of another torpedo. That one blew us into the middle of next week. I don't remember anything after it struck. I guess nobody did."

"They say 'most half an hour passed before the firing of the first and second torpedo," remarked Brophy, shaking his head. "Half an hour under gunfire, waiting for the second torpedo that would finish you! I guess it would have been a lot better if your captain hadn't been so brave."

"Brave!" snorted Carmody, flushing purple. "Criminal vanity, that's what it was! He should have stopped when he was ordered instead of trying to win a tin medal at the cost of his passengers' lives!"

Brophy looked at the other with interest. "There weren't many survivors of the *Arctic,* and this is the first chance I've had to talk with one," he said.

"It isn't a subject that I care to talk about," said Carmody, looking at his watch. "I'm sorry I can't help you any about this man Hoskins."

Brophy took the broad hint and arose. "It was a chance," he admitted. "You see, I heard a story about a fellow that looked like this Hoskins party. He was seen at the Belvedere. That's your place, ain't it? I thought perhaps you'd got to know him on the *Arctic*——"

"No. If he called at the Belvedere, it wasn't to see me."

"It was a bell boy's yarn," nodded the detective. "I knew there was nothing in it. Well, much obliged, Mr. Carmody. Good morning to you, sir."

Again Miss Dent saw her employer furtively wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

## CHAPTER XI.

### "WHEN NO MAN PURSUETH."

Later, Carmody related the episode of Brophy's visit to Birdie May.

"I thought it was all up," he confessed, "and I'm not so sure it isn't. They've discovered Hoskins' name and the fact that he was on the *Arctic*— two things I thought almost impossible. And of course the bell boy had to see that fool picture in the papers and chip in with his little tale. Funny how eager they all are to weave a strand in the rope—curse them!"

Clearly the "guvnor" was in one of his periodic fits of depression, and Birdie May, in his rôle of invincible optimist, proceeded cheerfully to do his duty. Perhaps it was his one shining virtue that he had for Myron Carmody a doglike devotion and fidelity.

"Nah then," he reproved. "Wot does it all come to? They've gone as far as they can go. If that tec 'ad 'ad anything on you——"

"I know," interrupted Carmody moodily. "But he may not be the fool he looks. And he must have some suspicion when he goes to the trouble of placing a spy in my private office. Yes, a spy—that Miss Dent. They pretended not to know each other, but they weren't clever enough for me. They're in cahoots, those two."

"Nah then," expostulated Birdie. "Why, guvnor, you invited that little gel into your orfice yourself——"

"I know it! The more fool I. They counted on something like that, and, anyway, in her former position she'd have been able to keep tabs on me. All that innocence of hers is only a mask. Why, it was in her house that Hoskins died!"

"Wot of it? Guvnor, tyke a bryce!" pleaded May. "You're imaginin' a whole lot wot never 'appened and which ain't goin' to 'appen neither. Nothing can 'appen if you only keep your nerve. Why, Miss Dent was working for the firm before ever Hoskins showed up. You know that."

"That wouldn't stop her earning blood money from the police, would it? No, nor anybody else." He laughed bitterly. "The man who says that crime pays is a fool! It may seem to pay for a time, but they'll get you some day. It's the whole world against you, and the greatest genius that ever lived can't buck those odds. I feel in my bones, Birdie, that my day is coming—coming just when life means most!"

"Your day means my day, guvnor, but I ain't worrying none," said Birdie cheerfully, blowing smoke.

"You're an animal, Birdie; a predatory animal without nerves, morals, or conscience," pronounced Carmody almost enviously.

"Them things never done me no good, guvnor, and I was born without them. Blame my parents."

"Perhaps *I* was born without them or they were in a very rudimentary state," replied Carmody. "But they developed with education, I suppose. I've learned how to suffer for my misdeeds, how to torture myself. You haven't, and so you're better off. But when my day comes, Birdie, it won't necessarily mean yours, understand? They'll never learn anything from me, and they can prove nothing against you."

"Nah then!" exclaimed Birdie, visibly affected. "We've 'ad enough o' this Dismal Jimmie business. They ain't goin' to 'ang anything on either of us, tyke it from me. This conscience of yours is a new thing, guvnor, and you ain't got used to it, that's all. When you've 'ad it long enough you won't mind it any more than these other guys. Sure, they all 'ave consciences, but it don't stop them from doing business, does it? It's something to be brought out only on Sunday with a boiled shirt. They rob the widder and orphan and cut each others' throats, but their conscience never sits up and hollers. It's better trained than that. You and me, being honest, only give the thing a nyme and don't try to fool ourselves. I can't see the difference between knockin' a guy on the bean and taking his wad or doing it with slick soap and a stroke of the pen. I know the law pretends to see a difference, but there ain't none—except that the strong-arm guy gets cents and a cell, while your Oily Johns gets dollars and his get-away."

He continued in this strain until at

length Carmody, as was customary, emerged from his black fit of depression. The invincible May optimism and habit of looking facts soullessly in the face, weighing everything in the balance of hard common sense, were a great tonic and stimulant to Carmody's harried nerves. Perhaps his fits of depression and gloomy forebodings were his form of dissipation, for he had no other. Or perhaps he liked to be reassured concerning the future. No hand could paint it rosier than Birdie May's, yet his pigments were those of truth—truth as he saw it according to his lights. He was no impressionistic dreamer or idealist, as Carmody well knew.

"So there's still only the one thing that can 'urt us," concluded Birdie earnestly, "and all the rest is just your imagination, guvnor. And we've got to go after that one thing. We've seen that this guy don't carry it on him, and so we've got to go after it——"

"I know! I know!" interrupted the other, pacing the floor. "I suppose I shouldn't hold back any longer, but I've been unable to reach a decision. I've been thinking over what you said the other day—that it may never be discovered. There's a great risk, you see, if we make this move. If we happened to be caught——"

"Leave it to me," said Birdie confidently. "I can pull it off alone. If they should 'appen to get me—which they won't—they'll never learn wot I come after. At the worst I can only get a dose for attempted burglary, see? Nyme the night, guvnor."

Carmody grappled with his new spirit of indecision, inwardly cursing himself for a coward and weakling. How he had changed, was changing, since the dramatic resurrection of Elijah Hoskins and all which that meant!

"Nah then," persisted the gentleman with the antediluvian jaw and no conscience. "Nyme it, guvnor, and we'll 'ave no more of these fears o' yours. Nyme it."

"Some night this week," said Carmody, wetting his dry lips. "I promise you that, Birdie. But, mind, no affair like that of Hoskins. You must control that wild-animal instinct of yours."

Mr. May grinned as if complimented. "Well, mebbe I did 'it Hoskins too 'ard, but didn't it all turn out for the best, guvnor? Where would we 'ave been now if I 'adn't? Get wot you go after; that's my motter."

Since the days of Cain and Abel much has been said in song and story concerning the strange workings of the guilty mind, but you have the whole thing in a nutshell in that line from Proverbs: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." Hence Carmody's new and involved attitude toward his pretty stenographer; for Birdie May had not talked him out of his suspicion. From this it may be seen that Myron Carmody was not only losing his wonted powers of judgment and decision, but his capacity for logical thought.

His motive for giving Edna Dent Miss Carmichel's position was that he might learn from her an important fact connected with the death of Elijah Hoskins, and this he had succeeded in accomplishing without her suspecting. His kindly, paternal manner and seeming interest in her welfare had induced her to talk freely, among other matters, of that memorable night.

She had served her purpose, and his intention had been to return her with thanks to Mr. Brown, for he had no belief in her ability of which he had spoken so highly to the other. But to his surprise she had proved quite as able as Miss Carmichel, and, moreover, far more qualified in other ways.

Carmody was not destitute of good qualities, and one of these was his personal attitude toward women. If his views were perverted in some other

ways, no woman ever regretted knowing him. As with Renton, the sex had never held a prominent place in his life, and even at the ripe age of forty-five, women remained at least something of a spiritual mystery. He had professed for Edna Dent a kindly interest which, at the time, was wholly fictitious, but it wasn't long before that interest became genuine. He admired her novel and courageous appeal in behalf of Miss Carmichel as he admired many other physical and spiritual possessions of hers. In short, he tumbled head over heels in love like any youth of twenty. It was his first real love—or so he assured himself—and he hid it carefully, wondering and somewhat ashamed. He had a sense of values, and knew that forty-five is seldom if ever chosen by eighteen for itself alone. He felt that nothing less would content him, nor did he believe that Miss Dent was the kind to marry solely for material gain.

On top of this had come Brophy's visit, and all Carmody's new and secret love for Edna Dent did not prevent him forming the suspicion he had disclosed to May. Perhaps it was made the easier for the people of whom sometimes we can think the worst are those for whom we care the most. Indifference doesn't breed such interest.

Carmody's state of mind, hitherto no heaven of bliss, may be now imagined. One moment his haunted and distorted imagination conceived his heart's desire as a subtle and venomous serpent which by ineffable cunning had wormed herself into his confidence in order to compass his downfall. She was his Nemesis, his sword of Damocles, a police ghoul fattening on blood money, a Madame Defarge watching and recording his every movement. The next moment he called himself a fool and blessed what he had cursed. His emotions swung between passionate love and passionate hatred, evenly balanced.

On the morning following his talk with May he came to the office with splitting head and congested eyes. He had walked the floor all night.

His curt and surly greeting to Miss Dent caused her to bite her lip and flush painfully. He had always been so courteous and kindly. Her regard for him was very high. What had happened? She turned to her machine, bewildered, feeling ready to cry. Occasionally she stole a glance in the little mirror, as a child may steal a look at an angry parent, striving to read the cause for such wrath.

Carmody sat down at his desk, scowling malignantly at his pile of morning mail. Suspicion had gained the upper hand again and was strong upon him. The mere sight of the girl—she was looking her best this morning—set his teeth on edge, his pulse to hammering. Her very quietness and self-effacing ways, which he had hitherto found so restful, incensed him. Oh, she was a sly one—a sleek, soft, purring creature waiting to spring and sink her claws in him, earn her blood money! He would watch her. Yes, he would watch her sharp—— And here Carmody's congested eyes encountered in the little mirror those of his stenographer fixed upon him in concentrated fashion.

It was his first discovery of the mirror, and a shock passed through him, real, vital, as if he had come in contact with an electric battery. For a moment his head whirled. So she could watch him in that little mirror! That was why she had asked that her desk be placed there, offering an excuse about the better light. She had been watching him all the time, all these days when he thought no eyes were upon him!

Mechanically his hand plunged into the desk drawer where reposed the pistol, but at its cold touch he seemed to awake as from an evil dream. No, no,

not that! There must never be that again.

"Since when, Miss Dent," he demanded, rising and coming toward her, "have you been spying on me?"

The words, his tone, startled her, but when she whirled round in her chair the look on his face was more than startling. "I—I——" she began.

"The visit of that detective yesterday upset you, too, didn't it?" demanded Carmody, thrusting out his jaw at her. He hardly knew what he was saying, nor, for that matter, did he care. His one overmastering impulse was to tear the mask from that mock-innocent face, denounce her, show her he had found her out; to do all this even though it meant his own ruin.

Now there were two guilty minds in that office, and the other, the girl's, was working with no more clarity than Carmody's. She had spent no better night than he, even though superior youth concealed the fact. Brophy's visit the previous day, the parts of the dialogue she had been unable to overhear, her employer's changed attitude toward herself, his present anger—there could be only one conclusion, and so to Carmody's bewilderment she suddenly burst out crying as if her heart would break.

"Oh, forgive me!" she pleaded. "I meant to tell you; indeed I did! But it was so hard. Y-you were so kind——" She quite lost herself in tears and words. It may be seen she was very young and inexperienced.

"Come!" said Carmody. "What are you driving at? What do you mean?" He was wondering if this were a police spy with acute sensibilities or merely a remarkably hypocritical young person.

"I—I mean—oh, you know what I mean. I know that detective found out and told you——"

"Told me what?" Carmody was regaining his self-possession.

"That—that I am here under false pretenses. That my father is not dead, but—but serving a life sentence for—for murder. That my name is not Dent, but Radcliffe."

She was far too concerned with her confession and the emotion under which she was laboring to mark the effect of her words upon her audience, otherwise Carmody's expression could not have failed to arrest her. All his new-found self-possession had vanished, a greenish pallor overspread his face, and he seemed as if about to collapse. But she was looking at the floor with bowed head, not at him.

"That's why," she continued, "I wanted off that day—to see my father. It was visitors' day at the prison——"

"For what particular crime was your father sentenced?" asked Carmody, forcing himself to speak with composure.

"For the death of a Mr. Allerdyce. It happened in Albany ten years ago. But my father never did it," she concluded in the drab tone of one who hasn't the least expectation of being believed.

Carmody turned to his desk, pretending to busy himself in order to hide his palsied hand and dazed eyes. His thoughts were a chaos. Then he put on hat and coat, and abruptly left the room without breaking the silence that had ensued.

In the outer office, he beckoned Brown aside. "Give Miss Dent her week's salary and let her go. I wish to see Miss Carmichel in her old place when I return."

Brown looked his astonishment, accustomed though he was to his employer's strange moods and peremptory methods.

"I will not tolerate deception," added Carmody, with a great show of injured virtue, for which, it must be added truthfully, he sincerely despised himself. But under the circumstances it was utterly impossible for John Rad-

cliffe's daughter to remain; her continued presence would drive him mad. And he must seize on the only excuse for her peremptory dismissal, despite the unenviable light in which it would place him.

"Understand," he finished to the bewildered Brown, "this is absolutely final. Impress that on Miss—er—Dent and tell her there's no use appealing to me. I refuse to see her. I won't see her under any circumstances!" He stalked out, and Brown stared after him, wondering what on earth had happened. It was a startling blow to his sentimental soul. Carmody's temper had improved wonderfully since the installation of Miss Dent in his private office, and Brown, good soul, had scented a romance. Was it possible he had proposed and she had refused him? No, Carmody wasn't that kind. But why hadn't he discharged her himself? This deputizing of such "dirty work" irked Augustus exceedingly and was his one real grievance against his employer. To ask him to discharge that little girl of all people!

He entered the inner office, feeling and looking as if he were officiating at his own funeral. The girl, her eyes red with crying, was busy getting her few belongings together in futile, fumbling fashion, as if she had guessed from Carmody's exit her impending doom.

"I—I know," she greeted, looking tearfully at the conscience-stricken Brown. "I'm discharged. You needn't say it——"

"For Heaven's sake," whispered Augustus, closing the door, "what's it all about?"

So she told him.

"Oh, I say!" he exclaimed, fearfully distressed. He had never suspected this burden she was carrying. "And he fired you for that? Why the—the——" Words failed him. It was probably the first time the meek and amiable soul of Augustus had risen in flaming revolt. "What the Harry has that got to do with your position here or anywhere else?" he demanded. "Would it make any difference if you'd a hundred fathers in jail——"

"D-doesn't it make a difference with you?"

"Good Lord!" said Augustus, rumpling his scrubby hair. "What do you take me for? Why, there isn't another employer, big or little, in this town who'd act in the rotten way Carmody has——"

"Are you quite sure of that?" Something in her tone challenged him. Somehow for a fleeting moment she looked strangely old and experienced. She smiled pitifully, gratefully. "Mr. Brown, every one isn't like you. You've never known how mean and cruel the world can be in such things. If you knew what I suffered as a child in Albany, what my mother suffered——"

"That may do for viperish children and snobbish, thoughtless women," said Brown, "but it has nothing to do with grown men—business men. Carmody isn't paying for your antecedents, and as long as you're qualified to do your work here it's no infernal business of his what they are. I don't pretend to understand him. This is an outrage, the act of a narrow-minded, contemptible——"

"The logical act of a logical world," she interrupted. "My father was a self-confessed thief, and therefore I'm not to be trusted. Heredity, you see. I may rob the firm some day. You may say my judgment of the world is cynical and wrong; perhaps, but I've formed it by such experiences as this. Perhaps the thing in itself doesn't weigh with Mr. Carmody, but the fact of my deceiving him."

"It's an outrage," repeated Brown. "There must be something back of it.

All the people in the world aren't like this——"

"You yourself prove that, Mr. Brown, but you are an exception. Oh, yes, a wonderful exception."

## CHAPTER XII.

### DAY OF DAYS.

She walked listlessly up Broadway, feeling the novelty of being abroad at such an hour and with nothing to do. She passed one kiosk after another, delaying taking the subway home, dreading the news she must bring her mother. From twenty dollars a week to—nothing! It was a stupendous descent, stunning in its suddenness and completeness. Finding another position would not be easy, though Brown had done his best to cheer her, promising to use his utmost efforts. "But I can promise you nothing like twenty a week," he warned. No, she couldn't expect such another piece of gigantic luck as that. And, of course, now she must give her right name wherever she applied. That, in a sense, would be a profound relief.

Near the St. Denis corner, a big motor overtook her and drew into the curb with a screech of its hooter. "Good morning," hailed Renton over the wind shield. "You're in a distressing hurry. Where away?"

He jumped out and insisted on shaking hands as if he hadn't seen her for a year. "You don't seem particularly glad to see me," he complained, "and I haven't seen you for two whole days." He pointed to a strip of court-plaster showing under his cap.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, instantly solicitous. "An accident?"

"No, design," he laughed. "Hardly conventional, though. Your neighborhood hasn't the privilege of possessing the only gentleman who thumps people on the head for a living. Jump in and I'll tell you all about it," waving a hand at the car. "I take it, if you're parading Broadway at this hour, they must have voted you a holiday, eh?"

"That's a sound guess. They have," she replied demurely, a faint twinkle in her eyes. The mere sight of his keen, boyish face and perennial smile had given her spirits a lift. She was young, and youth refuses to be floored for long.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I've voted myself a holiday, too—from this minute. Let's go off for the day and do the Arcadian stuff. I know a great place where we can eat; it's up in Westchester, the real thing in the way of jolly, quaint little inns."

She hesitated, but only for a moment. After all, why not? The autumn sun shone warm, and the bracing air set her blood to dancing. Why not for, no doubt, the last time? She had a confession to make, a confession which must change all this delightful intimacy. Meanwhile—— "I'll be delighted," she said, with sparkling eyes, looking as if she hadn't a care in the world.

She didn't know that there was more behind the invitation than the mere holiday idea, nor that Renton wasn't thinking or caring greatly about jolly, quaint little inns set in more or less sylvan solitudes. It was his heart, not his stomach, that was calling so insistently.

And so, after a whirl up the Drive, when they had crossed Washington Bridge and were threading a quiet road all tricked out in the brilliant reds and yellows of the season—well, it has been said by those who profess a profound knowelge of the subject that any woman knows when any man is about to propose. Renton, however, didn't know the precise moment himself, so how could she? It tumbled out of him quite unheralded and startled him almost as much as it startled her. Often of late he had visualized the time, the

place, and the girl, but now the only thing absolutely right was the girl. Instead of the beautiful, moving speech which he had carefully rehearsed, he turned upon her suddenly as if about to hit her and blurted out: "Will you marry me?" His face was grim and set as if, as of old, he were bucking the Harvard center with two downs against him and three yards to go. Which was not strange, considering what the winning of this particular game meant to him.

If the girl had ever suspected he was an old hand at the proposing game, she would have lost the idea right there. So far as these two were concerned it was a brand-new experience, the kind that can happen but once in a lifetime. They were out of their depth in unknown waters, and they floundered badly. In fine, this proposal can hardly be taken as a model of romantic grace and rhetoric.

"Why—why——" said the girl, big-eyed and frightened, as if he had proposed murder.

"Why what?" demanded the man, quite savage, as if he intended murder.

"I—I——" said the girl, looking wildly about as if for a policeman. "Oh, I can't——"

"You can, you must, you shall!" He was more coherent in action, and he gripped her hands as if they were a tangible inspiration.

"I can't!" she repeated desperately. Not, you will notice, "I won't." "Oh, I can't! You don't know, you don't understand. My—my father——"

"Is in jail," finished Renton, "where a good many of my folks should have been, I guess. I know all about it. Your father is John Radcliffe, and Anthony Allerdyce was my uncle. There, let's get that out of the way——"

"Your uncle?"

She collapsed.

"We'll have all that later," said Renton, supporting her nobly. "I'm not interested in them just at present. I'm not desperately in love with your father, but with his daughter. I don't want to marry him, but *you,* if you'll have me——"

"If—if I'll have you?" she stammered. "Oh—Phillip!" She struck the conventional note there, but the action which followed was far from conventional. The majority of us are more eloquent in action than speech, and, after all, action alone counts for anything in this world. And in action Edna Radcliffe was wholly satisfying.

"If I'll have you!" she murmured again, as if he had asked if she would mind accepting a present of the United States.

When at length a lucid interval intervened they had far more to talk about than your conventional Darby and Joan; it took a more serious turn, too.

"So, you see," he was saying, driving expertly with one hand, "I was interested in John Radcliffe and the possibility of his innocence even before I knew his relationship to you. I went over the case carefully in the back files of the *Herald,* and I could find nothing to contradict that possibility. The evidence was all circumstantial, and my uncle, though I'm sure sincere in his identification, could have been entirely wrong. Indeed, I'm sure he was."

"It's like a dream," she said. And she looked as if she were afraid she might wake up. "I cannot even yet get it through my head that Mr. Allerdyce was your uncle. And for you to believe in my father's innocence! And —and you're not just saying so to please me, are you? Yet the fact remains," she finished sadly, "that my father meant to rob the bank that night if he could. Also he kept that money he found. But mother and I never believed the—the other thing. He wasn't that kind. He was desperate that night—oh, you don't know how

desperate!—but he never could have done such a cowardly, cruel, fiendish thing. He wasn't a coward nor brutal——"

"I don't believe he had any hand in that affair," said Renton, with conviction. "We'll engage a good lawyer and detective and see what can be done. We may discover something even after all these years that would go to prove his innocence. Of course I can't hold out any promise of success. But we'll do our best, anyway."

Over their lunch at Woodmansten Inn, she told him something of her early life and of her mother's morbid dread of their secret becoming known.

"I always knew it was a mistake to take an assumed name," she said, "but it was my mother's wish, and you don't know all we suffered. My mother comes of an old New England family that I wish had more heart and less lineage. They considered that she married far beneath her, and they predicted all sorts of disaster. They declined to have anything to do with us, and so when disaster came she didn't want any of their charity or 'I told you so's.' It would be quite impossible to convince them that my father wasn't a born criminal, destined for the gallows from the hour of his birth. They've lived in cotton wool all their lives, you see, and have never known suffering or adversity. So that was the principal reason my mother took the name of Dent and came here to New York."

She then told of the permanent holiday voted to her by Carmody, relating it in more detail than she had to Augustus Brown. Renton, quite naturally, was astonished and wrathful.

"Brown's a brick," he said, "and he told you the truth—that no other employer would have acted in this fashion. I can't imagine any man, worthy of the name, doing such a thing. I would have said, from what Carmody let drop to me about his early struggles, that he was the last person to be capable of such meanness. And how dare he—— What did he mean by accusing you of spying on him?"

"Well, I was, you know. Only I didn't think of it in that light, and I never made a practice of it. No doubt he didn't mean what he said. He was so angry and upset——"

"It's incomprehensible," reiterated Renton. "The man has some secret worry gnawing at him, something that makes him act in this strange way. But he denied it emphatically to me, refused to confide in me, and so I quit attending him. You can do nothing with a patient who denies that he's sick. And Myron Carmody is sick mentally. I'm sure of it."

"I've thought so once or twice," she said slowly, "but I can't see that he has a thing on earth to worry him."

"So he declared," nodded Renton, looking thoughtful and abstracted.

When he kissed her good-by that night she put both hands on his shoulders, looking at him steadily with an infinitely tender, yet strangely sad and earnest, expression. "Phillip," she asked, "do you quite realize what you're doing?"

"About what?" Astonished, he raised her small cleft chin.

She flushed hotly, but her eyes were not ashamed. "About marrying me," she said in a low voice. "I—I don't want you to think yourself bound in any way. We've had a wonderful day, dear—my day of days, the very happiest in all my life. But—but I would rather you thought it all over calmly. No, let me speak! I am older in some ways than you, Phillip, for you have the heart of a boy—big and generous and trustful. But think of what all your fine friends will say, Phillip. Think what I am, what my father is. I—I cannot offer you even an honored name. I can give you nothing, dear—

not even my heart, for you took that long, long ago——"

"And I mean to keep it," said the thief quite savagely. "I'd like to see any one get it away from me. I may have a boy's heart, but I hope I haven't a fool's head. I'm thirty-five years of age and in possession of all my faculties so far as I'm aware. I've found the one woman, and all else is superfluous nonsense."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### INSPIRATION.

Renton sat up late that night in his study, thinking of the day of days, a smile on his lips. Occasionally he spoke to the attentive John Bull, who, with commendable industry, was warming his white vest at the fire.

"You'll like her," pronounced Renton confidently. "Can't help yourself, John. My, won't this old house be transformed! Something different from a museum, you bet. And we've got to do something about her father, you know. She's stuck to him like a brick, and there must be a whole lot of good in a person that *she* sticks to. She isn't an idiot over him, either, understand; she doesn't try to make him out a saint. No, nor do I. I dare say my respected potential father-in-law could have been improved a whole lot, a dozen years ago, without doing his system any harm. So could you or I, for that matter. But he was a good father and a good husband, and that says a whole lot. Also, he had hard luck—something you and I are no judges about. And it's quite possible he's being punished for something he never did. I feel pretty sure about that, though I can't tell you just why. The question is, what can we do?"

John offered no solution, no helpful suggestion, and so Renton sat staring at the fire for quite half an hour, his thoughts taking a new, yet old, bent.

Finally he arose and lighted a pipe, seated himself at the desk, and began to write as though inspired. His thoughts took the form of questions, and the following is what he committed to paper:

Why was Elijah Hoskins murdered?
Why was I knocked on the head and robbed like Hoskins?
What did Carmody hope to find in my desk?
Did Carmody know Hoskins? If so, what happened on the *Arctic?*
What is worrying Carmody?
Why did Brophy's visit upset him?
What was his real reason for promoting E. to his private office?
Why did he accuse her of spying on him?
What was his real reason for discharging her?

"Now," said Renton, addressing the bulldog, who had watched the proceedings with customary attention, inquisitiveness being John's besetting sin, "where in all this is the connection, as Brophy would say? Is there any, or am I a fool? Has Carmody a guilty secret, and if so, what? Could it—could it——" He took the pipe slowly from his lips and stared, wide-eyed, at the dog. "Could it—— No, it couldn't! Impossible! I've got the case of John Radcliffe on the brain. What should Carmody know about him? There's no possible connection. None in the world." He tore the paper in shreds and threw these into the wastebasket, laughing shamefacedly.

"Come, John, let's to bed. If I concentrate any longer on this thing, I'll go dotty. Why on earth should I think of Myron Carmody in connection with John Radcliffe?" Why, indeed? But he had hit on the truth, and passed it by unknowingly as many a wiser man has done before and since.

He had passed by the solution unknowingly, yet the problem itself was not forgotten. It persisted in his thoughts when he went to bed, persisted after he fell into fitful slumber. His subconscious mind was abnormally ac-

tive this night, and who can explain its mysterious workings? What inspirations have not come to us in our sleep?

Was it a dream, or had he not slept? Had it come to him as the result of concentrated logical thought, or was it a gratuitous gift from the fantastic dream world? He sat up in bed with wildly beating heart, wide awake, examining the inspiration which had been vouchsafed him. In the cold light of reason it was fantastic enough, yet at the same time logic supported it. Had he hit on the truth? He would soon find out. It has been proved over and over again that truth can be stranger than fiction.

He got out of bed and slipped on his dressing gown as the grandfather clock below stairs struck the hour of two. So he had really slept, slept for over an hour!

John Bull, from his comfortable armchair, watched his master with languid, drowsy interest. He was accustomed to Renton getting up at the most ungodly hours in answer to the night bell or telephone; he did not like it nor approve of it, for he objected to having his own rest disturbed. He curled himself up with a grunt, no doubt congratulating himself on the fact that he was not a doctor. But he kept a half-closed eye on the open bedroom door, waiting for his master's return. He knew quite as well as any human that Renton, if he must attend a sick bedside, would have to come back and dress. John wasn't much of a watchman, but neither was he a fool; he had more in that big head of his than people supposed.

Renton entered the study, his cloth slippers almost noiseless, and felt his way in the darkness with that confidence and accuracy which comes of long familiarity with one's surroundings. He walked toward the electric-light switch on the wall, then suddenly paused, conscious of a thin current of cold air beating on his bare shins.

"That's very careless of Peter," he thought. "One of the windows mustn't be quite closed." His mind was concerned wholly with the errand upon which he had come, otherwise that warning current of cold air must have been estimated at its true significance. Peter was the last person in the world to leave a window even unfastened, and Renton would have recognized this if he had stopped to think. But he was too excited over the probable truth of his inspiration.

He switched on the light, and at the same moment received a blow that almost stunned him. As in a dream, he found himself confronted by a squat figure that had evidently been in hiding behind the portières flanking the wall light. The man was poorly dressed, and wore a cap pulled down to his eyes, while a dirty bandanna handkerchief covered the lower part of his face. His right hand gripped a short length of lead pipe wrapped securely in newspaper.

He saw all this as in the flicker of a film picture; then he dodged instinctively and clenched as the man rushed him, swinging his impromptu but murderous weapon.

Strange, perhaps, that during the next few moments Renton's thoughts should flash back to that conversation he had held with Markham in the State prison. Markham had said that there were some men who, like animals, killed for the pure joy of killing; men little better than brute beasts, to whom nothing could appeal. He, Renton, had ridiculed that statement, born of Markham's experience, but now he was almost ready to believe. For the bandanna handkerchief had been torn away, and the face which confronted him was like that of an infuriated gorilla. He had never seen such a countenance. The man was drunk with

blood lust; he had let himself go on the first sign of resistance on the part of his intended victim. His small yellow eyes were not malicious, but burning with a wild, inhuman joy. Renton knew the man meant to kill him, would kill him even though there were no necessity; kill for the mere sake of killing, because nothing short of that would glut his savage soul. One might as well appeal to a drunkard or drug fiend to forego the climax of his particular intoxication. A pistol, to such a man, was useless, for he craved expression by physical violence. To kill instantly was nothing, but to beat a human being into an unrecognizable pulp was the acme of sensual enjoyment.

Renton outbulked his antagonist; nor had that initial glancing blow placed him at such a tremendous disadvantage. Normally he was perhaps the stronger man, but he lacked the other's power of convulsive, concentrated effort, his savage purpose and terrific energy. Notwithstanding the popular superstition to the effect that he who is fighting in a just cause is doubly armed, Renton would have exchanged all this for that piece of lead pipe. And notwithstanding the fact that a just cause is always supposed to triumph —by those who know nothing of real life—Renton was beaten to his knees. In fact, he was about to be very thoroughly murdered when a yellow thunderbolt shot into the room and landed on Mr. Birdie May with shattering force.

For a "stuffed image" Renton had surprised him, but this new antagonist, this pampered canine dismissed so contemptuously by Carmody, proved something more than a surprise. Birdie was thrown before he knew what had happened, and John held him down by the throat, precisely as a terrier holds a rat, until Renton called him off.

Renton had now the lead pipe, but Birdie's entire attention and respect was for the dog. He did not fear any man, but he feared, especially in his present defenseless position, animals like himself. A good deal of his savagery and blood lust had oozed away while John had him by the throat, and he had known enough not to attempt the slightest resistance. Resistance inflamed such creatures just as it inflamed him.

John, obedient to his master's command, had backed off slowly; but he was watching the prostrate May much as a pugilist, following a knock-down, watches his prostrate opponent who is about to rise. And Birdie was loath to rise.

"Tyke 'im aw'y, guvnor," he urged. "'E ain't fit for decent society. Why, if I move a 'and, 'e'll 'ave my innercent young life. Look at 'im! 'E's a cannibal!"

"And so are you, I think," said Renton, regarding him with meditative interest. "You're a dangerous man to be at large. You've the morals of a tiger, my friend. I don't see much difference between you and a homicidal maniac."

"Well, I ain't crazy all the time," replied Mr. May, his eyes on the dog.

Here several other would-be combatants entered the arena. First came Peter, in impressive disarray, badly frightened and carrying a venerable and quite useless weapon in the shape of a Revolutionary flintlock. He had been aroused by the fight in the study, but before venturing to his master's assistance had very properly sought reenforcements, represented by Jules from the garage, who bore a spanner, a tire pump, and a hammer. Jules was a rather excitable and impetuous Frenchman, and had seized upon the first articles that came handy. If Renton had experienced his day of days, this was Peter's night of nights for which he had been waiting at least

twenty years. Burglars at last! He wore the highly dignified and triumphant air of the oracle that has been vindicated.

The other would-be combatants who now appeared were Brophy, the patrolman of the beat, and a plain-clothes man. They entered dramatically through the French window first used by May.

Brophy was chagrined, for, unknown to Renton, the house had been watched since his, Renton's, assault. Brophy's theory that, contrary to the amiable and general belief, lightning is quite capable of striking twice in the same place, was vindicated. His theory was vindicated, but not his methods, for the lightning had eluded him, struck without his knowledge; struck while he was hoping it would and while he was patiently waiting for it. However, he put a good face on it, assuming command of the situation as if he had engineered it.

"Been laying for you," he said, advancing upon May. "We've got you dead to rights this time. You walked right into the trap."

Birdie eyed him with open disparagement. The dog had been removed, and he was his old optimistic self. "Yes, and I'd 'ave walked right out again for all you'd 'ave known," he replied. "A fine bunch you are, watching the 'ouse with me in it——"

"Think we didn't know you was in it?" demanded Brophy, reddening. "We were waiting to nab you with the goods when you come out——"

"Yah!" grinned Birdie. "Tell that to Sweeny. I come in right under your beaks, and I'd 'ave gone out the same way only for this bloke," designating Renton. "'E didn't 'ear me, neither—did you, now, guvnor? Own up. I've a pride in doing things right. I was took by an accident—which can 'appen to the greatest men going."

"That's true," said Renton. He smiled slightly, recognizing in Birdie May a gentleman of parts. "And but for the accident of the dog you'd have got away in spite of me."

"There you are, old sleuth!" said Birdie sunnily to the heated Brophy. "The guvnor 'as owned up 'andsome as between gentlemen. 'E don't 'ave to pretend he's cleverer than 'e is—because 'e ain't a pore old flat-footed cop."

Brophy lost his temper at this, and, taking Mr. May by the collar, slammed him into a chair. Then he stood over him in the orthodox third-degree manner. "You're a fresh guy," he said, "but before I'm done with you you'll be as stale as last year's war news." He shook a big fist under the other's rudimentary nose. "You're the guy that beat up and robbed Mr. Renton the other night!" He said this confidently, but it was a chance shot, and he was far from confident.

"Who? Me?" demanded Birdie, with every assumption of astonishment and outraged virtue. "Who's Mr. Renton—the guvnor, there? Come again, old sleuth. I never seen this guvnor before in all my life, s'elp me——"

"You lie!" thundered Brophy. "We'll sweat the truth out of you, you English crook. We've got more on you than you think. What about that Highbridge holdup and killing? Never knew any one by the name of Hoskins, eh?" These, too, were chance shots, and Birdie gave no sign that they'd hit the mark. Unlike Carmody, his nerves were conspicuous by their absence.

"You can't scare me a little bit," he said, looking Brophy in the eye. "You've got nothing on me, and you know it. You can't bully me into telling lies abaht myself. Yah, I know you cops; you're always looking for a goat."

He turned to Renton with that wheedling, respectful manner he knew so well how to assume. "Guvnor, I asks fair pl'y. I ain't never cracked

a crib in all my life. I'm an honest cove, out of a job and hard up. I'm starving, I am. Ain't 'ad a bite to eat since yesterday, s'elp me——"

"You're very strong for a starving man," interpolated Renton, a twinkle in his eye. "I wouldn't care to tackle you when you're well fed."

"A cove 'as to defend 'imself when he's attacked, guvnor," explained Birdie injuredly. "You'd 'ave 'ad my life—and that bloomin' dorg, too. I didn't mean you no real 'arm, but I 'ad to defend myself, and I was desprit. I ain't no regular burglar; you won't find a gun nor a jimmy on me. I'm only a poor amatoor. I was desprit, overcome by temptation, and one 'ouse looked the same to me as another. That's all I come 'ere for—to get a bite to eat——"

"You're a thundering liar!" said Brophy as a matter of course. But neither he nor Renton had ever seen this man before; and they believed, in their hearts, it was more than likely that his story was true.

It was Peter who resolved all their doubts and supplied them with the necessary connecting link. From the first he had been staring at Birdie in a puzzled fashion, and now he stepped forward, exclaiming: "This man is lying, sir; he's not out of a position or in needy circumstances——"

"Beat it, you old ostrich!" advised Birdie. "You never seen me before. You don't know nothing abaht me. Old sleuth can lie without you 'elping 'im."

"I know who he is, sir!" cried Peter excitedly. "He came with Mr. Carmody that day. He's the man who rang the bell. He's Mr. Carmody's chauffeur."

"Ha!" exclaimed Brophy, like a stage villain.

"Carmody!" cried Renton, arising and rushing to his desk. He was greatly excited. Birdie's eyes had become two yellow pin points, but he looked quite unconcerned, even indifferent.

"It's gone!" cried Renton, staring at the middle drawer, in which he had been rummaging frantically. "Then I was right! Search that fellow—— Hell!" For the room had suddenly been plunged in darkness.

Birdie had seen his chance, for all interest but his own had been momentarily centered on Renton. Birdie was a gentleman of decision and action, and had turned the wall switch under which he was sitting, then made a dash for the window.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PEN.

There followed the sound of breaking glass and a scene of indescribable confusion. Brophy, bowled over, caromed into Renton, who had sprung, like the rest, to the window, and he caromed into the patrolman and detective, the four of them coming to the floor in a tangled heap. On top of them fell Peter and Jules, while from the adjoining room came the bulldog's furious barking, as if he were endeavoring to point out that all this could not have happened had he been permitted to remain in the study. He was the best thief catcher of the lot, and Birdie and he understood each other.

Birdie was everywhere, apparently, yet nowhere; each thought he had secured him and advertised the fact in loud tones, thinking the rest a pack of imbeciles. They struck one another and swore. But when at length some one thought of switching on the light and they proceeded to count noses, it was discovered that Birdie's rudimentary organ was missing.

"After him, you fools!" wheezed Brophy, waving at the shattered French window. And the patrolman and plainclothes man obeyed, becoming wedged together in the window frame through

their haste and eagerness. Brophy extricated them by physical violence, and they sped off into the night.

Renton, in pajamas and a dressing gown, was hardly qualified for a pursuit through the streets of the metropolis, while Brophy wanted to run but couldn't, the last ounce of breath being squeezed out of him. He had been on the bottom of the heap. The night's events were not without humor, but neither Renton nor he felt like laughing immoderately.

"Gee, what a horrible mess!" panted the great detective, sinking into a chair. "I ought to be out in Hoboken——"

"You should," said Renton heartily. "I never saw anything balled up worse than——"

"Oh, it's easy to talk," said Brophy bitterly, resenting this cordial indorsement of his views. "Who'd have thought of such a rotten, low-down trick—old as your grandmother, too! But I'll square that guy. He can't escape."

He arose with a groan and lumbered over to the telephone. "I'll have a general alarm sent out——"

"General alarm be hanged!" said Renton. "If he was caught this minute it would be too late. He's had time to destroy the evidence."

The other gaped at him. "What evidence? Ain't we got him dead to rights for assault and burglary——"

"Do you think I care a hang about that?" roared Renton. "Don't you see that this man's implicated in Hoskins' death? Don't you see that he came here for the pen—and got it, too——"

"Pen? What the blue blazes——"

"The pen I got from Hoskins," rapped Renton. "The only thing he could have come for." Then he calmed himself with a visible effort, adding apologetically: "I forgot, Brophy, you hadn't doped this thing out. It's as clear as day to me, but it must be mud to you."

"You never told me you'd found that pen!" exclaimed Brophy accusingly, looking as if a great inspiration were expected of him and he was unable to give it birth. "Not that I understand what you're driving at. But you said that——"

"I know, Brophy, but Jules found the pen in the coupé one day last week. I forgot to mention the fact to you, and it was only forgetfulness, mind. It seemed so trivial and unimportant. Come upstairs while I dress, and I'll tell you all about it. I needn't try to go to bed now."

"Wait till I phone the house," said the conscientious Brophy. "We'll land this fresh guy, anyway. I'll have Carmody's place watched, and all the ferries. No one can fool me twice." In this he was mistaken, for he had been more thoroughly fooled than he knew.

For when Renton and Brophy had left the now deserted room, Birdie May stepped jauntily from behind the heavy portières, the same curtains flanking the wall light from which he had emerged initially to greet Renton. After switching off the light, he had hurled a heavy ornament through the window and then calmly retired behind the curtains while Brophy and the rest fought to get at what they all believed to be his point of exit. He had never been near the window, and they had indulged in a grand battle strictly among themselves. It was an old trick which he knew by heart.

Now he calmly walked out through that same window, while the patrolman and detective, a block away, were trying vainly to discover in what direction he had gone.

Meanwhile, unconscious of this proceeding, Renton and Brophy were upstairs in the former's room, involved in a heated controversy, Brophy considering he had been prevented from achieving the master stroke of his career by Renton's reticence.

"You never told me, neither, that Carmody had been caught at your desk," he was saying injuredly. "If I'd known that, I wouldn't have passed him up so easily. I always knew he figured in this somewhere."

"You did not," retorted Renton. "Nor did I. How could we? I didn't think about that pen until to-night—and how it came to me I don't know."

"You told me," returned the other, "you examined that pen the night Hoskins died, and that there was absolutely no clew——"

"Nor was there. But I never thought of *opening* it."

"Opening it?" Brophy stared incredulously. "What could be inside but ink?"

"I don't know. But that it had everything to do with Hoskins' death I'm sure. Carmody saw Peter give me the pen; he saw me put it in my pocket. I carried it on me for a while, but the day before I was held up I put it in the middle drawer of the desk. You understand that I hadn't the least suspicion of its importance. I forgot I had it, and when I found it in my pocket I threw it into the drawer simply to get rid of it. The next night I was knocked on the head and robbed. To-night Carmody's chauffeur breaks in—and the pen is gone."

"Beg pardon, sir," said Peter, who had been hovering about, "but if you mean that cheap fountain pen that was in your desk, it ain't gone, sir."

"What!" cried Renton. In his excitement he seized the old servant and shook him. "What do you mean? Out with it!"

Peter hung his head, looking embarrassed and profoundly ashamed. "Why, sir, I—I took it this morning, borrowed it, in a manner of speaking. I saw it there when I was putting the study to rights, and—and I always wanted to try one of these newfangled things. I knew it wasn't yours, sir, and I thought you wouldn't mind. I tried to write a letter to my sister with it, but the blessed thing wouldn't work. It's upstairs in my room——"

"Get it!" shouted Renton. "Peter, you've saved the day! You're the god out of the machine. I'll buy you a whole barrel full of pens that can and will write. Hurry up!"

Peter soon returned with the pen, a large, clumsy article that can be bought anywhere for a dollar or so.

"You see?" said Renton, displaying it to Brophy. "Not a mark on it, nothing to suggest a possible clew. But wait! I'll show you why it doesn't write." With trembling fingers he unscrewed the pseudo-gold nib, turned the pen upside down, and shook it. No flood of ink issued forth, but a long, thin pencil of paper.

It was the supreme moment of Renton's life, this triumph of reason and inspiration.

"The clever old gobbler!" breathed Brophy. "Who'd have thought of hiding a paper there? And him supposed to be cracked!"

They unwrapped the paper spill, and when it was spread out it became an oblong of perhaps four inches by six. The paper was thin, but of good texture and with a glazed surface. It was covered with writing in ink, a neat, exact hand, and the following is what Renton and Brophy read:

On Board the S. S. *Arctic*, off Kinsale,
October 14, 1914.

We have been torpedoed by a German submarine, and are sinking. No help is in sight, and they are preparing to fire a second torpedo, which must send us to the bottom at once. The boats have been wrecked, so we must all perish.

As I am soon to appear at the Bar of Judgment before my Maker, being, like all on board, in the presence of death, I hereby freely and fully confess that I am one of the two men who robbed the branch of the Second National Bank, in Albany, on the night of May 3, 1903. Also that I and my accomplice, whose name and identity I can-

not bring myself to divulge—this, as I consider, being a matter between his Maker and himself—are responsible for the death of Anthony Allerdyce, president of said bank. John Radcliffe, convicted and sentenced for this crime, is wholly innocent. My only hope is that this confession may in some manner reach the proper authorities, so that justice may be done him.

(Signed) MYRON CARMODY.
(Witness) ELIJAH HOSKINS.

Hoskins' signature was in a scrawling hand; and following it, in the same writing, was the legend: "A Humble Soldier in the Valiant Army of Our Lord."

There was a long silence. Then Brophy gasped out: "I've heard and read many confessions in my time, but this —— Didn't I tell you there's generally a connection between even widely separate crimes? Didn't I tell you Hoskins' death had something to do with the case of John Radcliffe——"

"You did—not!" said Renton. "You're no clairvoyant, nor am I. You've had the surprise of your life, and you know it. So have I. We may have thought what we liked, but, after all, we were only fumbling in the dark. And nothing on earth could have convicted Carmody but these words penned by his own hand. Call it luck or fate or whatever you like, but it's shown up all through this game time and again. Carmody missed taking this pen from Hoskins. Why did I take it from Hoskins? How did Carmody know I had it? Why did I happen to put it in the desk the day before I was robbed? And though to-night I hit on some idea of the truth, it was the accident of Peter borrowing the pen this morning that has saved the game for us. Carmody's chauffeur came after it, and he'd have got it and destroyed this paper. We've won, Brophy, but let us admit that all the breaks in the game went dead against Carmody and with us."

"And why shouldn't they?" demanded the other virtuously. "The breaks in the game are always against the crook in the long run, and he knows it. You ask Carmody about it. And look here, son, if you hadn't held back about him searching your desk, if you'd told me you'd found the pen and given me a chance to examine it——" The return of the patrolman and detective cut short Brophy's self-vindicatory address.

As may be expected, these gentlemen had quite failed to find any trace of Birdie May.

"Well, we're after bigger game now," said Brophy, rising. "If that fresh guy tries to reach Carmody, he'll be nabbed. I'll phone the One Hundred and Second Street house to send a man round to the Belvedere; he'll tell the other two on watch to nab Carmody if he should try and make a get-away before we're on the job. Coming?" he finished, turning to Renton.

"No," replied the latter. "I'm not at all necessary, and I don't find any pleasure in such scenes."

## CHAPTER XV.

### FATE'S LAST BLOW.

At the Belvedere apartments, Carmody was awaiting the return of Birdie May. He paced the floor nervously, glancing at the clock from time to time. It was now after three. What could be keeping him? He had profound faith in the other's ability in such undertakings, but at heart he had been against the enterprise. The conviction that luck was against him, that there was no use fighting fate and the inevitable, was taking possession of him. There was something uncanny and terrifying in the way events had conspired to defeat him.

And to think that Edna "Dent" should turn out to be the daughter of John Radcliffe! And he had thought himself in love with her, had actually wished to marry her! He had not as

yet recovered from that shock of the morning. Would he ever recover from it?

The telephone in the hall rang, and he jumped guiltily. Who could be phoning at such an hour? A nervous tremor overcame him.

"Hello!" he said into the mouthpiece, striving to steady his nerves and voice.

"Hello, guvnor! That you? This is Birdie. Any chance of that boy downstairs on the switchboard 'earing us?"

"No," replied Carmody. A cold sweat had broken out on him. "Why don't you come here? Where are you?"

"Somewheres in France, as the war censor says. I ain't giving it aw'y, guvnor. There's a couple o' bulls waiting for me by this time outside your 'ouse." Then he related briefly his failure, using such figurative phrases that if central chanced to be listening she could have no idea what it was all about.

"Guvnor," he finished pleadingly, "it wasn't my fault, s'elp me. I was playing in 'ard luck all through. If that thing 'ad been there, I'd 'ave got it easy. Don't go blaming me——"

"I'm not," said Carmody. "I know you did even more than your best." His voice had steadied. "Look here, you say they think you've got it?"

"Yes. It's been lost somehow, see? They think I got away with it. But they know now what it means; that pie-faced sawbones must 'ave doped it out. They'll look for it, and it may 'appen to turn up any time. So you've got to beat it, guvnor, while the going's good. You can tyke no chances, see?"

"Yes, I see."

"They've got nothing on you now. Them two bulls you'll find outside are waiting for me, not you. They can't touch you. If I'm nabbed, all they can 'and me is a stretch for wot I done to-night. But they ain't going to get me. Nah, then, buck up, guvnor," concluded Mr. May, with all his old vigorous optimism. "Don't you go fooling with that bloomin' conscience o' yours. The game ain't up, and it ain't going to be up."

"Don't worry about me," answered Carmody. "I'll play this out to the finish——"

"That's the talk, guvnor! Where do we meet?"

"Watch the personal columns in the *Herald*. How are you fixed for funds?"

"All to the good," came Birdie's voice cheerfully. "They'll never find the old stocking where I've soaked it."

"Good! So long, Birdie—and thank you, old pal."

"So long, guvnor. See you later."

Carmody hung up the receiver, entered his bedroom, and began packing a suit case. Now that the crucial moment was here, he had regained something of his old-time nerve. Since the coming of Elijah Hoskins, he, like Birdie, had contemplated the possibility of flight at a moment's notice and had prepared accordingly. A large sum was always carried in cash, while the bulk of his new-won fortune lay to his credit, under another name, in various European banks. Like many another criminal, he could continue his existence abroad under a different identity. Thanks to loyal Birdie's warning, he had a good start and could profit by it.

It was at this point that Carmody's old indecision suddenly engulfed him; that hesitation and indecision for which Birdie blamed the Carmody "blooming conscience." He paused in his packing. A good start? Why a start at all? The pen was lost, and might never be found. They thought May had won clear away with it, destroyed the only evidence which could convict him, Carmody. In that case, why should they make an effort to find it? It was lost. Luck had at last broken his way!

He paced the floor, thinking hard.

Did not this hasty flight smack of panic, and had not Birdie lost his usual cool nerve in advising it? Birdie had to run, but why should he, Carmody? That would only serve to advertise his guilt. Why should he become an exile, abandon his now prosperous business —and Edna Radcliffe? Yes, she was still a weighty factor, for, after a sudden revulsion, his feelings toward her had returned to their former state. What if Radcliffe was her father? Passion cannot be killed so easily as all that. He could see himself living very comfortable with her as his wife. Yes, he couldn't go off like this without seeing her again. They could live abroad.

And so Carmody frittered away his last chance, his one small oportunity of escape.

For at the last he reversed his decision, and, in sudden panic, attempted to make up for lost time. But it was too late. He met Brophy and the rest on the stairs, and they never gave him a chance to use the pistol in his overcoat pocket. Luck was still against him, and what he had considered its sudden turn in his favor—the disappearance of the pen—was, in reality its last deadly blow against him. This he seemed to recognize, for he shrugged and said: "It's no use, gentlemen. I'm playing against the bank, and you can't beat that. The game has finished, as I knew it must, sooner or later." His old fatalism had claimed him, the last remnant of his nerve had gone, and he accepted the situation not without philosophy and fortitude.

Afterward he spoke quite freely to Brophy, who was anxious to have several matters cleared up to his satisfaction.

"No, Radcliffe never knew me, nor I him," he said. "You were quite right on that point. I went a bit crooked after leaving San Francisco, but never got into trouble with the police. And I kept changing my name, you see, and on the move. That's why you couldn't find anything against me in those ten years. Then I fell in with an English lag—a fellow who had done time on the other side for burglary——"

"That was your chauffeur, May," said Brophy. "He's the guy that helped you turn off Allerdyce. We know it, Carmody, so you might as well own up. Why, he's been nabbed and has blown the whole game. He's going to turn State's evidence, if you don't beat him to it. He lays the whole guilt on you."

Carmody smiled faintly and wearily. "It won't do, Brophy; that's too stale a game to play on me. It's a wonder bright fellows like you can't think up something new once in a while. And you needn't put a stool in my cell, for you won't learn anything. You've got nothing on May but assault and breaking and entering. I told him to get that pen, but he never knew what was in it. He'd no stakes in the game. He'll tell you that himself—if you ever catch him."

"You're lying," said Brophy, "and you know it."

"Well that's up to you to prove," smiled Carmody, in the same weary, ironic fashion.

"Why did I rob the bank?" he continued, in answer to the other's question. "Don't be foolish, Brophy. Why does any one rob a bank? Not for his health or the exercise. If I'd had a rich father, my friend, I'd have been one of your great captains of industry. But you can't do anything without capital. The best I could earn—honestly—was twenty dollars a week, and you can't save a fortune out of that. I knew if I only had some capital I could make a success out of the motor-car business. My mistake was in not getting it by some swindle that kept within the law —the way most of your representative citizens do. Well, perhaps not the ma-

jority, but a lot of them, anyway. You know the respectable crooks in this town as well as I do. But I wasn't clever enough in those days; I hadn't the education I have now. I knew only one trick—like the cat that always runs up a tree. And luck was playing against me even then. Why did Allerdyce have to die? We didn't mean murder."

"Do you know that Allerdyce was this Doctor Renton's uncle?"

"No, that's news. But nothing can surprise me now. If you said you were Allerdyce's mother, I wouldn't contradict you. It's all the same."

"Tell me about this fellow Hoskins," pursued Brophy. "You didn't know him before meeting him on the *Arctic?*"

"No; you were right about that, too. He was a strange character and with an undoubted power of swaying one's emotions. I thought I was past being worked on that way, but I wasn't. You see, we're all fakes, especially about this religious business. We're atheists, agnostics—anything you like, so long as things are going well; but when you come right down to dying we're kind of anxious to square things up with the hereafter. You must remember, also, that I hadn't much to live for then; the business wasn't paying like it is now, and I wasn't at all sure about getting these war contracts. It's a lot easier to die when you haven't much to live for.

"I'd listened to Hoskins preach to the second cabin; and—well, what's the use of going into it? I lost my nerve, that's all. Luck gave me another crooked deal—scared me into giving myself away. And then I didn't die, after all, nor Hoskins, either."

"But you didn't know he'd been saved?"

"Of course not. I had confessed to him in my cabin—after we were hit by the first torpedo—and he suggested I put it in writing. My main anxiety then was to have justice done to this fellow Radcliffe. You can imagine I hadn't forgotten him during the past eleven years. Hoskins had the idea of placing the paper in a bottle and throwing it overboard so that it would be saved if we weren't. But while we were looking for a suitable bottle, the second torpedo hit us. That finished the business for us."

"Had Hoskins placed the paper in his fountain pen?"

"Yes, that's why it wasn't destroyed by sea water, and why they didn't find it on him."

"Did he try to blackmail you when he suddenly appeared at the Belvedere that night?"

Carmody shook his head. "I can't lie about him. What's the use? He told me a long, rambling story about being in the hospital and traveling with gypsies, and how there were times when he didn't remember anything. You see, the idea of having justice done to Radcliffe was back in his head somewhere, but he hadn't been able to get it out. He said he had been saved miraculously by the hand of the Lord in order to fulfill His purpose. I could see he was cracked, and yet in ways sane enough—sane enough to make me swap places with Radcliffe. No, it wasn't blackmail with him, but religion; he didn't mean to profit by it in any way. In fact, I tried to buy him off, but couldn't."

"He insisted that if you didn't publish your confession to the world he'd do it for you?"

"Exactly. He must have known then why I didn't—that this Miss Dent was Radcliffe's daughter. And he must have found out where she lived. I don't know how he got the information. Well, I let him go—but he was followed, of course."

"Here's what I don't understand," pursued Brophy. "You saw him, in your cabin on the *Arctic,* place that paper in his fountain pen. Why, then,

after holding him up that night, didn't you get it?"

"For one thing, I didn't attend to that job in person——"

"I see. It was Birdie May."

"The name of my accomplice was John Doe," replied Carmody, with his faint, ironic smile. "Well, in my apartments that night, Hoskins showed me the paper in proof that he meant business. He took it from his wallet and replaced it there. I might have killed him then, but I was too stunned. I couldn't bring myself to it. There were people in the next room, and, like a fool, I let him go. After leaving, however, he must have put it in the pen. He wasn't so crazy, you see, as I thought, and evidently had an idea I might try to get it away from him. John Doe's instructions from me were to get the wallet and everything that might disclose Hoskins' identity. Fate, you see, was still against me. It wasn't until I learned from Miss Dent that a fountain pen had been found on Hoskins that I remembered the scene in my cabin and saw the awful mistake I had made. I knew then, when it was too late, that the paper must be in that pen."

"And you learned from Miss Dent that Doctor Renton had it?"

"Of course. That was my idea in bringing her into my office. You see," concluded Carmody, "I was beaten from the start. It wasn't anybody's cleverness, but just fate. That's all you can call it. I'm glad it's all over. I think the only clever thing in the whole business was Doctor Renton's doping out the secret of that pen. I can take off my hat to him for that. He certainly isn't the fool he looks, and you can tell him that from me."

Subsequently, after Radcliffe's release, they did their best to get a statement from Myron Carmody implicating Birdie May, but neither threats nor promises had any effect and he denied to the last that the other was his accomplice.

"John Doe isn't going to suffer for my mistakes," was all he would say. "Fate had it in for me, but not him; for he didn't know any better, while I did. I had the brains, and he only did what I told him. Yes, I know this gag about there being no honor among thieves. That shows how much you know. Being a crook doesn't change a man's make-up. If he's straight with his pals, he stays straight; and if he's a twister, all the psalm singing and keeping the law won't make him different. You'll travel a long way among your psalm-singing bunch before you'll find a truer pal than John Doe was to me. Throw him? Not much, gentlemen, not much!"

And so Mr. Birdie May, wherever he may be, is still wanted for assault and attempted burglary, but nothing else—which the law can prove.


# The Volunteer Nemesis

*There is a new idea in the unusual novel we will print in the next issue. It is a story of city life, with a young millionaire as the chief character.*

By PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN

# The Fiddling Kid

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

*Author of "Shotgun Jones," "The Threatening Eye," Etc.*

**By rights old Jim Edwards' kid should have been a trifle wild and woolly, a range rider and a good one; instead he was a fiddler. A tall, loose-jointed, strangely diffident boy who was a misfit in that environment where men lived hard and fast, where the keynote of everything was action.**

THE roots of this veracious narrative go away back into the crevices of time—as time goes in a man's life—to a May night when old man Adams and I sat on his porch, I prophesying, he grunting dissent.

The ranch house fronted the river. Little more than a hundred yards distant, another huddle of buildings showed black and white in the moon glare. The dwelling there likewise faced upon the river, as if those two old-timers, Adams and Edwards, bearing up from the hot aridness of the Southwest, had pitched their domiciles to look always upon that ample stream.

All up and down the bottoms the moon bathed the stretches of sagebrush, flung back shadows from towering peaks that rose to the level of the plains beyond. Over the rim of the valley peeped a distant mountain peak. It lacked little of being bright as day. The Missouri was in flood. The glittering ribbon of its sweep was cut by a brilliant moon path. And it was very still when our voices ceased.

Away on the other side of the river a portion of bank gave before the gnawing teeth of the current. The splash of it as it struck the water first broke that profound silence. Close on that a sound of hoofs came cal-*lop* cal-*lop* down the trail from the bench. In a minute the rider swung across our vision. He tossed a packet to the porch floor without halting, and rode on to the stable, his voice uplifted lustily:

"Oh, I got a girl in Baltimore."

"Yes, yuh have—like blazes!" old man Adams grumbled—all men past forty were "old" in the range parlance of that day. "Yuh got a girl at the head uh Eagle Creek. That's why yuh sift in with the mail after dark, 'stead uh three in the afternoon, yuh son of a gun. If that there red-headed *dulce* uh Melky's stays there all summer, every saddle hoss on this ranch'll be rode to a whisper."

He hitched his chair, a huge creation of heavy frame with seat and back formed of buffalo hide stretched on green, a patriarchal old behemoth of a chair, into the glimmering light from a lamp within, and looked over his mail. I rolled myself a cigarette and reflected upon the ways of old-timers.

To old man Adams, all the plains country was created and ordained by Providence to the use and benefit of cattle and cattlemen. Grass and water and sheltered nooks for ranches, a little

plot fenced off for convenient holding of saddle stock—all the rest of those wide miles of open range were common property, always had been, always would be. We had argued upon the permanence of that. When I spoke of possible settlement, of farmers and fences changing times, he hooted derisively.

Well, from his point of view, I dare say it looked absurd to picture snug, plowed fields and potato patches elbowing wild stock off those hot, dry plains.

"Why, say, Bill," he snorted, "I seen farms, real farms, lots of 'em, in Ioway an' Illinois. If them corn-fed people ever come out to settle in this here country, which never did an' never will grow nothin' but grass an' sage an' prickly pear, an' not much uh that to the acre, on a average, they'd take one look an' hit the trail back home. This ain't no farmin' proposition, Bill. I bet yuh, yuh could settle twenty farmers with grubstakes an' teams an' plows on any ground within half a day's ride, an' the second season they'd need a job at wages to keep 'em from starvin'. This here's a grazin' country. Nobody can make nothin' else of it."

Now I lacked old man Adams' years between the Rio Grande and the Canada line, but the last five seasons I had been rambling while he had been sitting still, and I had seen in the Dakotas that swelling tide of the land hungry pushing west and north. I had had a glimpse of what irrigation and barbed wire could do to a cowman's inalienable privileges. But my observations only served to amuse old man Adams until I spoke of quitting the range for a business opening in town. Then the old man jumped me with his spur rowels locked.

It was true enough that I played a little poker, that I took a drink now and then, that I'd never saved money. About one cow-puncher in twenty did. The cowmen didn't save money—they made it. There is a profound difference in the two methods. The latter one appealed to me more than any job. But to Adams, who had known my father when I was in knee pants, it was almost heretical for me to try my fortune apart from the range. He had no use for a town man's game. He would barely admit of any dignity in a pursuit a man could not follow on horseback, of any real success apart from cattle and horses. The mail had filled in a gap between semipaternal lectures on the error of my way.

Now, in the quiet night, from the Edwards place over the way, there rose the long, sobbing note of a violin, doleful, sad as a weeping woman.

Old man Adams peered over the top of a paper.

"Darn that fiddlin' kid!" said he irritably. "I'd sooner hear the coyotes howl."

"You're right on the prod to-night," I laughed. "I'm going to hit the blankets."

"Well, now, say, Bill," he gave final admonition. "Yuh wanta forget that Sandy Point idea. When yuh finish with them Edwards colts, I'll give yuh a good layout here. Yuh can put your money into heifers, an' be independent in ten years."

"I'll think about it," said I, over my shoulder.

But, to tell the truth, I did not think much of it. Although it was but faintly visible, I somehow discerned the handwriting on the wall, so far as the range, the round-up, and the cow-puncher were concerned. I had the fatalistic conviction that we and our ways were not for long. There was a little sentiment mixed up with my conclusions. I wanted to quit while the quitting was good. I didn't want to degenerate into a mender of fences and a shoveler of hay. I had quite positively decided on that. And I was not thinking so much of myself, nor of how I proposed to lay

the foundations of a fortune, when I crossed the space between the two ranch houses, as I was thinking of that patient violin player whose instrument was crooning in the quiet river bottom.

Old Jim Edwards' fiddling kid.

Near and far, in the Eagle Creek country, he was so known, and no one outside the youngster and his father ever quite sensed how much sting lay in that tolerant phrase. I didn't myself, not fully, until long afterward. I knew that the tall, loose-jointed, strangely diffident boy was a misfit in that environment where men lived hard and fast, where the keynote of everything was action, purposeful, often aggressive, yet quick to resent aggression.

I could hardly see how old Jim had fathered such a son. I am equally sure that sometimes it puzzled Edwards himself. Old Jim was a typical cowman of the pioneer type, tall, spare, weather-beaten, hardy as one of his own range horses. Square according to the range code, notably hospitable in a region where hospitality was more than a custom, still there was nothing kind or considerate or refined about old Jim. He could override ordinary men quite as a matter of course, if things came that way, and he had been known in more turbulent days for a spontaneous readiness to back his arguments with a six-shooter. By rights his only son should have been a trifle wild and woolly, a range rider and a good one. He had two daughters who could very nearly have qualified as stock hands, a pair of exuberant young damsels whose greatest grief was that old Jim kept them in the State capital at school when they would far rather have been galloping about the ranch.

But Frank was different, extraordinarily different, a source of constant irritation to Edwards. He wouldn't ride unless he had to. He wouldn't do ranch work except in the most perfunctory way. If there was any branch of range activity he could qualify at, no one knew what it was.

He could play the fiddle, and that was all he could do, all he desired to do, and he would do that with a persistence that showed him possessed of at least remarkable pertinacity. No matter that his father sneered and his sisters poked fun at him, Frank stuck to his violin. There was something in it he wanted to get out, some perfection of tone to master, some harmony he wanted to release.

Long before I started on the horse-breaking contract, I had heard the story of Frank's fiddle being barred from the ranch house—how old Jim had gone at him roughshod and threatened to break the instrument over his head, and how the dreamy-eyed worm had turned, pulling down on his angry parent with an ancient buffalo gun.

I can't vouch for the truth of that. I knew that Frank had to do his fiddling in the bunk house or the stable, when the horse wranglers would suffer him.

This night he was sitting on a block under a scraggly poplar, and the violin was crying. There was never much music in his playing—as we reckoned music, us roughnecks. He didn't play dance music unless he went to a dance for that particular purpose. Earlier in his career the old man had sent him for three years to a boarding school. He came back with a fiddle under his arm and music in his head, and not much else. So that his playing wasn't blind struggle for expression. He knew music, and he had a method. He would work for hours over one short passage, until the reiterated sound drove everybody within hearing crazy.

Yet he had a faculty, if you would sit quiet and sort of let yourself go, of making you see things and feel them. He could get tones with a slow sweep of his bow that got under your skin. He liked to get off by himself and play.

I've seen him standing up before his battered old music stand when he didn't know any one was watching, swaying his body to the time, his face set as if he were listening for something he couldn't quite hear.

And the old man used to curse him and his fiddling high up and low down, but it never stopped him. That is, it would stop him temporarily, for old Jim would go out of his way to put him at this job or that, and Frank was obedient enough. He wasn't combative. The old man used to call him lazy, worthless, everything he could think of, but it was scarcely true because the kid would break his back to get through a job in order to have that fiddle tucked under his chin again. I should say he put in an average of four hours a day practicing. The boys on the ranch guyed him a lot. The old man encouraged them, and Frank never resented it much. He had a way of lifting his eyebrows and shrugging his shoulders, as if it really didn't matter to him what anybody thought or said.

There was a girl, too—an added thorn in old man Edwards' flesh. A mile below us, on the opposite side of the river, there had settled some years before a bent, spare-built man with a sallow, bedraggled wife and a great brood of children. They had no stock beyond a four-horse team, a couple of saddle horses, and two or three milk cows. "Nesters," the range called them, shiftless, slack-going folk. In the rich bottom land, Barlow—the man's name—dug up a garden, watered it from a hillside spring, and grew almost everything they required in the way of food. A melon patch that yielded unfailingly gave them money for their simple needs when Barlow marketed his melons every fall. A living—no more. The Barlows scarcely seemed to have ambition for more, and the cowmen looked down on them and their like accordingly—just as the masterful possessor always looks down on the dispossessed.

Barlow's oldest girl was a fair-haired, purple-eyed slip of a thing, very shy, and not taking much after her kin either in speech or manner. How Frank Edwards came into her orbit is neither here nor there. But Barlows' was the only place he ever voluntarily visited, and all his father's stingingly pointed remarks did not deter him. He forded the river when it was fordable, and crossed in a canoe when it was not, and his violin always went with him. Edwards was a Texan. He always spoke of the Barlows as "damn white trash."

"Fixin' to hook up by 'n' by, I suppose," I heard him lash out at Frank once. "Raise watermelons for a livin' an' play the fiddle for fun. Gittin' down to your own level, huh?"

I crossed the yard this night and stood listening to him play. It was no piece that I could name, but in that silvery hush it stirred vague feelings of sympathy, and a curious wonder how a man could draw rosined strands of horsehair across catgut strings so that the sounds lured and tantalized and seemed to tell a story one could not quite grasp.

Old man Edwards walked out of the bunk house as I came in. A few steps from the door, his harsh voice rose testily:

"Quit that caterwaulin' an' come over to the house!"

The violin stopped short. I went into the bunk house. Rock Hubbel turned his head in the lamp glow.

"Old fellow's on the peck," he said placidly. "Called the kid down scandalous a while ago. Frank goes right out an' sets under the poplar an' begins to fiddle. Old man fidgets in here like he'd a bur under his tail. Beefed to me out loud. First time he ever did that. Allowed he was liable to run the kid off'n the ranch, fiddle 'n' all."

"More likely to take him across his knee and spank him," I suggested lightly.

"Think so?" Rock smiled. "I wouldn't. He shore don't amount to much as a hand around this old ranch —but there's a lot more of old man Edwards in that fiddlin' kid than old man Edwards thinks there is."

It seemed as if there might be something in Rock's opinion. What transpired between Edwards and his son that night no one ever knew. They had the ranch house to themselves. In the morning Frank was missing. Old Jim sat over his breakfast sullen and scowling. When he got out of earshot, Rock said to me:

"The kid's hit the trail, all right, an' I guess he hit her afoot an' alone. His saddle's on the peg, an' there's nary a horse gone. I guess Frankie's vamoosed."

"Well," said I, for I was young, and the fighting broncs I had to tame into mannerly saddle stock lay heavier on my mind than the troubles of the Edwards family, "it isn't our funeral."

But I had one more reminder of the matter that forenoon. My bunch of colts was along to that stage where I took each in turn for a few miles' dash on the bench to take the ginger out of him. One cantankerous brute did his best to pile me before I was clear of the corral gate. Whereupon I shook him over the undulating roll of the plain above in a wider circle than usual. When I was about to turn, I spied afar a figure plodding out the Sandy Point Trail. Men who walked in that region were subjects of curiosity, for to be afoot invariably spelled misfortune of some sort. So I loped on, and when I came up with my man it was young Frank, with a gray blanket rolled around some clothes in a bundle across his back, and atop of that his violin case.

I felt a trifle diffident when I'd overtaken him. I wanted to give him a lift, and there was no way I could. He stopped and sat down in the grass, making himself a cigarette. He had trudged himself into a sweat that streaked his thin, brown face. But he was not afflicted with melancholy. Indeed, he seemed in better spirits than common.

"Well," said he at last, "I got to be jogging on. So long, Bill. I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on the road. Maybe I'll be a troubadour, fiddling my way around the world, when you fellows are still plugging around here watching the barbed wire make a checkerboard of the range. So long, Bill."

Maybe, thought I, as I jogged home, the fiddling kid had a wider vision than we'd given him credit for. Perhaps he had seen that no matter how he tried he could never follow in his father's footsteps—that the changing years would sweep away the old, free-handed order. And, seeing that, perhaps he wanted to follow his own individual bent, wherever it might lead him.

Personally I thought he was right about the barbed wire and the plowed fields and the sordidness of living that would come with the transition. It was bound to look sordid and mean to us men on horseback, who were used to big things, big herds, big spaces, a fine absence of petty restriction. Not one in a hundred of us could articulate the feeling, but it was there. But—I felt dubious about old Jim Edwards' fiddling kid bucking up against the world with nothing save his easy-going way and his fiddle.

With myself, now, it was different. I had an objective. I did not ask myself whether Frank Edwards might not have as clearly defined an objective as I. I dare say I wouldn't have understood if he had tried to tell me.

But that parting shot of his lingered in my mind. I had been hesitating. I hated to quit the range, but I wanted

to quit it before it quit me. I didn't want to stick until it was tapering off into a mere struggle for existence. I didn't suspect myself of any sentiment in this. I put it that I wanted to make a stake, and an opening loomed elsewhere. Old man Adams scouted this notion. We'd argued the matter. To him, free grass and unfenced water, range herds, and range riders were enduring as the hills. He could no more see that great business swept away than his neighbor Edwards could discern in his son's fiddling anything but a caterwauling nuisance.

Old Jim told Rock Hubbel in a confidential burst one day what the final split came over. Frank had wanted him to stake him to enough money so that he could go away and study to be a musician. Rock told me. We laughed. A musician, to us, was a long-haired, she-man sort of creature. Our ideas were rather primitive concerning artists and artistic endeavor.

Losing his boy rode old man Edwards so that he was hard to get along with, and I was glad to turn in my last bronc, saddle broke and gentled, draw my money, and depart. I had a last session with old man Adams over the way when I told him I was going to boss a stage line of my own out of Sandy Point, and that my days of saddle work for wages were over.

"You'll be around next spring, lookin' for a job on round-up ," he prophesied. "Darn your hide! I'd give you a good layout, Bill. Your dad was as white a man as I ever knowed, an' I got no boys uh my own."

Perhaps. Anyway, this is not my story, even if the personal note is strong. I rode the sixty miles to Sandy Point. The projected layout looked good. The settlement that old man Adams scoffed at was already seeping into an area of bottom land north of Sandy Point. So I dug in—rather, three of us dug in, pooling all the money we had and could borrow, to put on a stage line between the Point and Grassy Flats. We had a mail contract to begin on. My end of the business lay in Sandy Point, in charge of our barn and extra stock. I was headquarters man.

Sandy Point is tame and humdrum and full of civic righteousness these days. Then it was a real cow town with all the trimmings. The permanent residents numbered about two hundred. The floating population came and went like the tides. At any rate, it supported four saloons, a dozen professional gamblers, and Scotty Young's dance hall, which was the social center of the town, in a way of speaking. It contained within itself all the various diversions Sandy Point could offer a man in search of variety, and it was well patronized in every department—dance floor, bar, and gambling room. The poker tables, roulette, and faro layout were in a section partitioned off at the extreme back. One stepped from the street to the dance floor, with its bar running along one side, and a small raised platform where a pianist and a fiddler jointly thumped and scraped the dance numbers from eight in the evening until the early hours when the joy seekers wearied of the round.

Frank Edwards had taken up the fiddling end of Scotty's two-player orchestra I learned almost as soon as I struck town. I could scarcely think of him, with his leaning to deep stuff in music and his natural shyness, sawing off dance tunes all night long to hilarious stock hands and such in an atmosphere thick with tobacco smoke and the smell of liquor. But he was there on the platform, scraping away at the pianist's elbow when I dropped in to Scotty's about nine that night. I edged over and spoke to him in an interval between dances. He didn't have much to say.

"I'm not stuck on this job," he ob-

served, when I asked how he liked it. "But there's good money in it. That's what I'm after. Scotty's fiddlers always get jagged, he says. Six dollars a shift—and it don't go back to Scotty over the bar, either. I'm giving myself six months in this racket, and then ——"

He didn't say what he had in mind after that, but I took it for granted the musical-study bee still buzzed in his bonnet. He went along day after day, the quietest, most self-contained man in Sandy Point. Night after night he fiddled for the dancers, as sure to be there at eight o'clock as the time rolled around. Scotty raised his wages, for steadiness like that meant money in Scotty's pocket—the dancing made men spend their money like millionaires. Off shift, Frank kept shy of the place. He had a rented shack, cooked his own grub, and fiddled to himself just as he used to do on the ranch. When he wasn't busy at that, he would sometimes drop around to my barn office. Sometimes he'd talk; sometimes he'd just sit smoking and looking out across the flat country with no expression whatever on his face.

Once a month he would hire the best saddle horse I had and make that sixty-mile jaunt from Sandy Point to where his girl lived on the river. That was the only shift he missed.

So the summer slipped along. Old Jim came to town once or twice. I heard through Rock Hubbel that he went straight up in the air when he heard his boy was fiddling in a dance hall, and that he was more cantankerous than ever. According to his lights, I suppose he was justified in classifying Frank as utterly worthless after that. When a man reaches that conclusion about his only son, he's apt to be bitter. Edwards was. He passed Frank up like a white chip when they met in Sandy Point.

The spring round-up passed through town on its last sweep. The sheep-shearing crews were with us then, making the place hum with the big money they sweated out in the pens. Beef shipping came on. And the fiddling kid still fiddled for Scotty Young. About the only difference in him was that he took to playing poker in a small way, and playing in phenomenal luck.

At least it was set down to luck. To me, watching him, it was mostly cold, methodical calculation. He wasn't playing because he hankered for the excitement of the game, as most men gamble. He played to win money, with about as much feeling as a groceryman sells a pound of coffee to a casual buyer. He had infinite patience, a self-control that is given to few gamblers. If the cards went against him, he quit. When he was winning, he played hard. That system brought him out regularly a winner on a week's play. He was always strictly sober—and he saw everything. Crooked play was highly unsafe in our uncultured circles, but there was always some smooth hand ready to take a chance and put something over if opportunity afforded. A man had to be able to protect himself. Frank could always do that in a poker game. And, spending two or three hours every afternoon in that gambling house, being a privileged house employee, I dare say he saw a lot that wasn't patent to the ordinary outsider.

I was not much on poker, but I did play the faro bank now and then. Frank dropped into my place one afternoon. There was no one else in. The days were getting cooler then, and I had a fire. He flicked the stub end of a cigarette into the stove front, and, without any sparring, said to me:

"Bill, when there's a big play on, with Scotty dealing and Mike Steele keeping cases, you lay off that faro bank."

I looked at him for a second.

"What have they got?" I asked.

"They've got a box fixed to get the money when the play's big enough to go after," said he.

"I don't imagine they'll get far with that," I remarked.

"I don't know," he returned. "They're pretty smooth. Anyway, take my hunch. It only goes with those two and a big play against the bank. Don't holler about it, nor say I told you."

"I won't," I agreed. "Just the same, I'd like to be present when somebody gets onto it."

He went away, and the matter never came up between us again. I focused an eagle eye on that particular combination whenever they got a heavy play —which often happened. It wasn't uncommon for a bunch of players to drop two or three thousand at a sitting, or beat the bank that much. But I didn't see anything wrong. However, I took Frank's word for it to the extent of coppering my own small bets on such cards as the plungers played to win, with the agreeable result that I found myself a neat sum ahead at the end of a few such sessions.

I had plenty of work on my hands at any time, and there came a week that left me not even a spare hour from my business. During that week I heard a rumor that old Jim Edwards had sold his horses, brand and all, and was dickering for the sale of his ranch besides. I didn't think much about that until one afternoon my stable hand came in from an errand over town.

"There's a whale of a play on against Scotty's faro bank," said he. "Old man Edwards is buckin' the tiger with all his forty years' gatherin'. They've took the limit off for him, an' he's stackin' his bets to the roof. She's one big game, now, I want to tell yuh."

Like most of the stockmen, old Jim nearly always took a crack at faro when he was in town. Ordinarily he'd go for about three or four hundred. If he had a few jolts under his belt, he'd stand to lose a thousand or so—and he beat the game about as often as it beat him.

I hadn't more than a mild interest in this, and it was merely the natural curiosity to take a look at a big game that led me into Scotty's an hour later. I had scarcely set foot inside the door when I sensed something out of the ordinary. There wasn't a soul in the big, bare dance hall except a girl who sat on one corner of the musician's stand, swinging her slippered feet and smoking a cigarette. Even the bartender had deserted his post to stand peering through the doorway to the gambling room. From within that came the faint click of chips, rising very distinctly in the uncommon stillness.

I edged in. The room was half full of men. They stood in a silent group about the faro layout. The poker tables were empty. The roulette dealer stood behind his table, apparently the only man who wasn't vitally interested in what was going on. Every other man's eyes were fixed eagerly and intently upon the faro layout, behind which Scotty sat at the box, Mike Steele faced him over the case rack, and a third house man sat in the lookout chair on Scotty's right. Old man Edwards humped on a stool beside the case keeper. Before him were stacks of blue and yellow chips, markers, a pile of fifty and hundred-dollar notes. He had the layout speckled with bets. Steele was bucking the game, too, but his bets were piking ones compared to Edwards'—Edwards was making the play, and he was certainly making it strong.

I glanced about the ring of watching faces. Farther along, on the outer fringe, I saw Frank. He, like the others, had his eyes fixed intently on the bank. Young moistened the tip of a finger, slid out a card, repeated the motion, and took down a stack of yel-

low chips and another of blue—three hundred dollars on a single turn.

"The old boy's hittin' it up, eh, Bill?" a voice murmured softly in my ear, and I turned to recognize one of Edwards' horse wranglers. "Looks like he'd get stuck. He dumped four thousand last deal."

"How long's he been playing like this?" I asked.

"About two hours, I guess," the wrangler answered. "He's half shot. Closed up a deal for the JE this mornin'. He's got it all on him in cold cash, too—forty or fifty thousand, I guess. Took him twenty years to work up that bunch uh horses. Won't it be hell if he shoots it all at faro? Them fellers'll peel him if he don't look out. They ain't lettin' him stack 'em to the roof for fun. Why, he bet a thousand on the queen straight up a minute ago."

I watched the play closely. It wasn't a good deal for old Jim Edwards. He won the smaller bets and lost the big ones. But he averaged up the play by calling the turn on the last cards out of the box—a two-to-one loss for the bank.

"Say, yuh know, the old cuss has done that 'most every deal," the wrangler whispered in my ear. "He's there when it comes to callin' the turn."

Frank Edwards backed out of the group and left the room. He didn't see me, or didn't appear to. I wondered what he was thinking that drew his brows so close together, recalling, as I did, his warning to me against that very combination which his father was recklessly bucking. A little of that money, I reflected, would have meant a lot to Frank. I wondered if, in spite of the hard feelings between them, blood would still prove thicker than water, if Frank had any idea of stopping the game before the old man went broke. I didn't see how he could. Scotty Young and Scotty's house men were anything but cooing doves. Unless a man had the drop on them, it was all his life was worth to interfere in that game, with all that plunder in sight. I wouldn't have cared to chance it.

So I kept one corner of my eye on young Frank through the door. He seated himself on the music stand. The dance-hall lady reached over and playfully tweaked his ear. He brushed her hand away just as a fellow might brush away a fly. The girl shrugged her shoulders and left him sitting there staring at his toes.

The new deal opened up. Edwards had his hat pulled low over his eyes. That side of his face which I could see was flushed. That proved a bad deal for him. His checks went, and most of the pile of bills, but he dug up more money and called the turn for a thousand dollars even. At that, he must have been still seven or eight thousand loser on the deal.

It was very quiet in there. Nobody spoke above a whisper, and the whispers were few. The click of chips, the soft slither of the cards sliding out of the box, the crackle when somebody struck a match to light a cigarette—that was about all. The thing was in the nature of a duel, and in my mind—I dare say in the minds of others there—it was a question of how long old Jim Edwards would last. He was stuck and plunging. Most of us gambled. All of us had seen plenty of gambling. We knew the unreasoning fever that grips a man when he gets in deep. Nobody expected Edwards to quit until he went broke, till he had played his last cent. On the other hand, one deal with the cards breaking right for him would go far toward breaking the bank. There was not more than twenty thousand dollars in Scotty's roll. The saloon and dance hall didn't figure much. It was only a shack.

But the good deal didn't come. The succeeding one was the worst yet for

Edwards. I was wondering sardonically if Scotty and Mike Steele had decided to take him into camp for all he had before their nerve frayed out with the strain. I had only Frank's word that they were out to get the big money, but I didn't doubt his word. And if they were dealing out of a crooked box to old Jim Edwards, they were apt to be a trifle on edge.

The deal progressed to the last turn. Edwards had lost most of the money in front of him. The jack stood in the box. Below it lay concealed the ace, trey, queen. Old man Edwards glared at the layout. One hand outstretched on the table shook a little.

The turn might come any way—trey ace, queen trey, queen ace—I don't know how many possible combinations there are. Calling the turn is risky. That is why the pay is two for one. And old Jim had been calling the turn with uncanny certitude. I suppose that impressed him profoundly.

His hand stole slowly up to the inside breast pocket of his coat. Scotty's eyes followed that hand. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. Edwards took out a long leather pocketbook. Within its fold there lay a flat pad of bills. He took them out in a bunch and threw the bill fold aside so that it struck a bystander about the waistline. And he laid the sheaf of notes on one corner of the ace, saying, in a voice that scarcely rose above a husky whisper:

"Ace-trey—for the bunch."

The man beside me drew his breath with a whistling intake. I dare say I did myself. I've seen a few big bets. All of us had. But never anything like that—a man well along in years staking all that was left of his years' industry on a single turn of the cards.

"How much is there?" asked Scotty, staggered.

"Twenty-five thousand," Edwards grunted. "G'wan! Turn!"

Scotty stared at the money. He was taking a desperate chance, a chance he hadn't figured when he took the limit off. Crooked box or straight, no man could say how the cards lay below that grinning jack. If Edwards won, Scotty was broke on the two-to-one pay. All Edwards had lost and Scotty's bank roll besides hovered on the turn of the next two cards. Scotty's mask of a face twitched a little. The lookout leaned forward. Mike Steele, at the case rack, gripped the table edge till the cords stood out on the backs of his hands.

"G'wan! Turn!" Edwards repeated.

Scotty moistened his fingers. His eyes swept the circle of tense, onlooking faces, came slowly down to the jack showing in the box. And just at that hushed, pregnant moment, when the stillness had grown thick as a fog, every man holding his breath, there cut like a trumpet blast through that stillness the loud rasp of a violin.

Frank swept into the "Soldiers' Chorus" from "Faust." Imagine the loud, martial strains of that bursting suddenly through a silence in which a sigh would have sounded like a gale. It rang in the big, empty dance hall like a clarion.

Scotty half rose in his chair, and sank back with a gasp. Old Jim half turned, and one of his hands reached involuntarily for the money he had bet—the last of his bank roll. And neither of them saw the lookout's imperative signal to the bartender, nor the bartender's hasty bound toward the musician with a gestured command to cease.

The violin stopped in the middle of a bar. Old Jim faced the layout again, his hand still on that twenty-five-thousand-dollar bet, and Scotty sat back waiting to see what he would do—praying, I felt sure, that he would pull it down.

But he didn't. He hesitated a long

time. Then he pushed it back on the ace and said briefly:

"She goes as she lays—ace-trey. Deal!"

Again Scotty moistened his finger tips very slowly, reluctantly. And as his hand descended to the box, his cold gray eyes lifted in my direction just as I felt myself being elbowed aside and saw the fiddling kid's fair head push past me, edging in close to the table. Men moved aside to let him have clear view. Everybody knew who he was. Scotty's eyes wavered between the boy and his father.

"Why in glory don't yuh deal?" old Jim demanded raspily.

"Go on, Scotty, turn 'em!" the fiddling kid spoke then, and his voice snapped like the pop of a whip. "After you've turned 'em, win or lose, dad'll take a look at that box."

Still Scotty hesitated. His right hand seemed to move slowly toward the card-press drawer.

Men fell away to right and left hurriedly at that motion, leaving young Frank all in the clear. A white-handled forty-five rested in the palm of his hand, its muzzle airily directed toward Scotty. And the youngster was smiling an unmirthful, wolflike-smile contortion of his lips.

"Turn, Scotty!" he commanded.

The gambler blinked. His gun hand rested palm down on the table. With his left he turned the box on edge—signifying, as the faro custom is, that the deal was at an end.

"No!" he said thickly. "Damned if I do!"

Old Jim looked up at his son, at the scowling gambler, and his gnarled old fingers retrieved the bunch of bills. It went into his pocket with a thrust of his hand.

"I guess I sabe," he said crisply—and reached for the faro box and the deck Scotty had used.

It was all done in an instant after that. Desperate, Scotty tried to snatch the box, and as he did so the lookout pulled and shot blindly—too blindly, for he missed, and the kid's gun brought him sprawling down on the layout. Old man Edwards got the box and cards.

A sudden side sway of the crowd pushed Edwards back a litle. He stood there, deliberately counting the cards, while the lookout gasped his life out, sprawled limp across the green cloth.

"Huh!" he said, in an eloquent tone of understanding. "Fifty-four cards an' a needle-tell box."

Scotty tried to rise, but it wasn't his turn. There were forty men in that room, and half of them had lost money one time and another against that crooked box and the pair that worked it. They began to take things to pieces. The first angry surge pushed me, the fiddling kid, and old Jim Edwards out into the dance hall, together with a fair-sized section of the flimsy dividing partition.

Out on the main floor we three brought up together. Old Jim looked at his son. He had the faro box in his hands still. He slid out the three cards.

"Trey, ace," said he. "An' the queen in hock. I played it ace, trey. I'd been cleaned."

Frank said nothing, only poked the empty cartridge out of his gun and put in a fresh one.

"Well," old man Edwards eyed him queerly. "I reckon I been some mistook in you, son. I sure have."

"I killed a man," the boy muttered. "I guess there ain't no mistake about that."

"I would if you hadn't," the old man grunted. "So it's all in the fambly. Crooked faro boxes leads straight to shootin'. I'll interview this Scotty person m'self when the boys get through. Meantime—come on over to Curly's an' have a drink with me, son."

They went off together, that lean, hard old stockman with one arm

thrown across the shoulders of the boy he had nagged and despised, crossing the dusty street of Sandy Point like Damon and Pythias for all the world to see.

Scotty Young emerged from that fracas a cowed and chastened gambler. I heard that he voluntarily returned all the money old Jim dropped—very likely the cheapest life insurance he could have taken out at that stage of our civic development. As for the killing of the lookout, a coroner's jury called it self-defense—which was only the truth—and the fiddling kid heard no more of that matter.

It circulated around Sandy Point afterward that old Jim staked the kid to five thousand dollars and told him to throw it to the birds if he felt like it. I don't vouch for the truth of that, but I do know that the next time I saw young Frank he was on his way to Fort Benton to marry the shy little girl from the melon ranch. He had good clothes on and he walked like a man who has found himself.

And he didn't come back to Sandy Point while I was there.

Time, the great sceneshifter, works at his appointed business diligently.

Fifteen years later, I sat with old man Adams on the porch where this tale opens. Old man Adams sat in his buffalo-hide chair, a trifle more leathery, gray hair gone white, a little bent with his years. The same sort of moon silvered the bottoms, shining on the fenced lane that used to be the Sandy Point Road, laying its brilliance on cultivated fields where wild stock had run when I was there before. Down by the barns, where a rider had gone clattering that night long ago, a buzz arose, a shape with two glowing, yellow eyes rushed up past the house and went thrumming up the grade to the plains where the farms I had foreseen cut all that vast range into a fruitful checkerboard.

"Yuh was a true prophet them days, Bill," old man Adams ruminated. "They ain't no more range. They's nothin' in this county but sugar beet 'n' spud ranches, 'n' they plow with gasoline. Me'n old man Edwards we stick. I got so I c'n fork a automobile 'most as good as I used to fork a hoss. I'm sure glad yuh blowed in onexpected t'-night, Bill. Yuh hit it just right."

"How's that?" I inquired.

"Look!" he pointed.

About the Edwards domicile little colored lights were breaking out in clusters. Voices sounded, laughing, calling back and forth. Some one thumped lustily on a piano.

"What's on?" I asked.

"Celebration," old man Adams grinned. "Frank's home. Blowed in just twenty-four hours ahead uh you. They're givin' him a fiesta."

"How did he pan out?" I asked curiously.

"Yuh never heard no more about the Edwards bunch after yuh went to Idaho, huh?"

I shook my head.

Old man Adams chuckled.

"Wait a minute," said he, and, heaving himself up out of his chair, went into the house. He came back presently. He laid a big, heavily mounted photo in my hands and struck a match so that I could see plainly. The picture showed a tall, fine-looking man in evening clothes, smiling over the violin cuddled under his chin. Across the bottom was written:

Compliments of Franz Eduardo.

"That's him," said old man Adams. "Franz Eduardo, virchuoser. They tell me he gets a thousand dollars for fiddlin' a few tunes once in a afternoon—right up with Ole Bull an' all them French an' Rooshian fiddlers the wimmin rave about. Franz Eduardo—old Jim Edwards' fiddlin' kid!"

# Such Is Life

By H. C. Witwer

*Author of "Safety First," "Stupid," Etc.*

**Charlie MacSmith came into baseball like a man going into Alaska to peddle electric fans—he had the same chance of making good. He had nothing to recommend him but his health and his brother Andrew who was a "manufacturer of concrete domes." An impossibility on the diamond, yet he was destined to achieve fame.**

MANY a guy has started out to be president and wound up as lightweight champion or general manager of the We Should Worry Soup Company. At seventy-six he may be there with enough dough to outstare a head waiter; but with all that he'll sit in his office or the plush seats of his 1917 Simple Six and give himself an argument like this:

"Yes—this is great stuff! I got all the money my family wants, I'm a pretty big fellow in my precinct, and all I got to do is press a button to get anything from electric lights to a divorce. This is *the* life! I got them old-fashioned Roman emperors lookin' like well-to-do grocery clerks, but—I certainly wish I had got myself elected president; that's what I *wanted* to be!"

Can you imagine a guy like that bein' annoyed simply because he didn't get what he ordered? Comical, eh? Well, I've seen guys like that, with everything any reasonable voter could want, moan out loud all day because somebody had it on them at tennis. I knew a guy once that had made a million out of a trick screw driver—and he worried himself to death because he couldn't write a play! I know actors that wish they was prize fighters, ministers that have a sneakin' ambition to be a cop, doctors that would give a course in how to cure appendicitis for one in fancy piano playin', and bartenders that are crazy to be opera singers!

That's the way it goes all along the line—no matter how heavy a guy is hittin' in his particular game, he's always wishin' he was doin' somethin' else. They always get a laugh from *me* with that stuff!

Me? Oh, I'm satisfied. I'm gettin' by lookin' after a big-league ball team—there's money and excitement in it, and that's all there is to anything large. I got no kick comin'—I believe in lettin' good enough alone—I'd be in great shape at the end of the season if I went around wishin' I was what I ain't.

At that, though, I could pilot an aëroplane as good as any of 'em if I'd only had a chance to follow it up when I was young.

But, aside from that—there's some of these guys like I told you about that never gets rid of their longin' to be somethin' else. They can't get it out of their system—they don't want to—it stays with them like their skin!

With Charlie MacSmith it was deeper than that.

Charlie MacSmith came into baseball like a guy goin' into Alaska to peddle electric fans—he had about the same chance of makin' good. He had nothin' to recommend him but his health, and they don't give you nothin' in the box score for that. Charlie's ambition was to stand on the mound at the Polo Grounds some very hot summer afternoon, with three men on base, two out—the score tied, about forty thousand fans draped around the stands, and Ty Cobb at bat.

That was the way Charlie wanted the layout—and then he was goin' to make Cobb fan.

Just as the third strike was called on Ty, Charlie wanted to die, so's when he was laid out he would have a smile on his face like the guys that gets killed in the movies.

It wouldn't have been so bad if Charlie had just *wished* that would happen and let it go at that. But when he found he wasn't goin' to get no crack at Cobb, he invented a system for pitchin' no-hit, no-run games—and devoted his young life to makin' it good.

He failed to come through accordin' to his original dope—but he ran up a roll of fifty thousand beans, got his name in every flat in the country and his pictures spattered all over the front page of the newspapers. So you couldn't exactly say he fell down at that.

We're startin' a series with the Indians in Cleveland a few years ago, and when I come out to the park in the mornin' to see if the bunch is sittin' around knockin' the B. X. & W. sleepers instead of warmin' up, a guy takes off his hat and grabs my arm just as I'm goin' in the gate. Whenever a fellow does that lid-raisin' thing you can lay eight to five that he's either goin' to nominate his youngest kid for mascot, take you for a cigar, or borrow a buck. So I pull a bank-closed-to-day smile on him and let him do the leadin'.

"Mr. Mac," he begins, edgin' up to me, "I hear your pitchin' staff is weak."

"We got a spy on the team, eh?" I says. "Well—what of it? Suppose it is weak—do they pinch you for that in this town?"

"Ha! Ha!" he comes back. "That ain't bad! I ain't the chief of police, though. I only thought if you wanted to strengthen your team up a bit, I got just what you're after."

"What is it?" I asks him. "Horse-radish or onions?"

"I wish you would lay off that small-time comedy," he comes back. "They told me you was a business man, but I guess I was bein' kidded. I ain't got no horse-radish or onions—all I got is a pitcher that nobody can hit, that's all!"

"Yes," I pipes, "and all Rockefeller's got is a billion. What d'ye mean, nobody can hit him—what does he pitch, buckshot?"

"I see it's no use," he answers, puttin' on his hat again and lookin' at me like he was disgusted. "You had to try out that act of yours and I happened to come along and be the fall guy. Well—I did what *I* could—I said I'd ask you and that let's me out."

"Right!" I tells him. "You can't blame a guy for tryin'. If anybody asks me, I'll say you pleaded with me all mornin' and wound up by threatenin' to shoot me if I didn't give this twirler of yours a chance."

I starts in the park, but he grabs my arm again.

"Wait!" he hollers. "Don't you even want to see him work? I can have him out here in two minutes."

"Where is he?" I says. "In your pocket?"

"No—but he's right here in the park, waitin' for you to show up," he answers.

I turned and give this guy the up and down.

"What are *you*—the syndicate that's

backin' this guy?" I asks, after a minute.

"Practically," he grins. "I'm his brother."

He reaches in his pocket and hands me a card. I took one flash and fell up against the gate. Here's what it said as near as I can remember:

ANDREW MACSMITH

Manufacturer of Concrete Domes.

"Say!" I says. "You didn't turn this guy out at your factory, did you?"

"I knew you'd pull somethin' like that," he comes back. "Every simp that sees that card breaks their neck tryin' to get my goat. I still got the goat and I'm makin' more money out of the concrete domes than the guys that kid me about it, so I should be annoyed. Let's go!"

"All right," I tells him, trailin' him into the park. "Bring on your talented brother and I'll see what makes him go."

The minute we get inside, Andrew slaps me on the back.

"Hello!" he cries. "Charlie's workin' out already. I suppose he figured I'd fix everything up and went right ahead."

"Charlie hates himself, don't he?" I says. "I guess he thought the minute you mentioned his name to me I'd tear after him so fast with a contract that I'd get pinched for speedin'."

By this time we're in back of Charlie, who hasn't seen us comin' or don't care, and is goin' right ahead with his day's work. He's a long, skinny guy with red hair and a trick wart on the back of his neck. I stood behind him while he starts to pitch to big Mason, who's standin' at the plate, grinnin'.

Charlie keeps lookin' at Mason for about two minutes without movin' as much as a hair. "Gettin' the range," accordin' to brother Andrew's tip-off, whispered in my ear. Finally he gets his sights set, makes a quick little jump in the air like a scared rabbit, and begins to swing his right arm around as if he was tryin' to throw it off his shoulder. I'll bet that old whip of his was makin' thirty-five revolutions a second if it was movin' at all. The bunch is fallin' over each other with hysterics, and Mason is holdin' his side with one hand and the bat with the other.

"Who's Charlie wavin' at?" I asks Andrew when I can stop laughin'.

"He ain't wavin' at nobody," says Andrew, lookin' kinda sore. "He's windin' up!"

"I think he could do better with a key or one of them self-starters," I tells him. "He acts like his motor is stalled—you ought to step over and give him a little more gas——"

"You won't think it's so funny in a minute," growls Andrew. "Just watch that boy!"

He didn't need to tell *me* that, because I wouldn't have looked away from Charlie just then if there was a race riot goin' on under the bleachers; I wouldn't have missed a move for a double-header with the Athletics. Finally Charlie figures he's geared up about right, and, without any warnin', he lets go the pill.

By leapin' back ten feet, Mason fooled him and escaped bein' beaned.

"How's that?" yells Andrew. "That's speed, ain't it?"

"Great!" I says. "I'll bet he hits him the next time!"

"He's always a little wild at first," Andrew explains. "He ain't got the range yet."

"That's all right," I says. "He——"

Zam! Charlie releases another one, which passes over the plate about thirty feet up in the air. Mason turned around and watched it disappear in the dugout under the stands.

"Missed him again," I says to An-

drew. "Is a wild pitch the only thing he's got?"

"What was the matter with that one?" asks Andrew. "You didn't see Mason hit it, did you?"

"Nope—I didn't," I tells him. "And I was lookin' right at it. You know, four of them things entitles a man to first base in this league and——"

"Sure, sure!" Andrew cuts me off. "That's just the idea! That's what Charlie always does—let's 'em walk!"

"Let's 'em walk?" I yells. "What d'ye mean he lets 'em walk? What does he do after he's walked three—sit down and wish for the next guy to hit into a triple play? No wonder nobody can hit this bird! That's it, eh? He walks 'em all!"

"Not *all,*" Andrew corrects me. "Only the first three."

"He beans the next one, eh?" I asks.

"Bench the comedy!" says Andrew. "There *ain't* no next one! I'll tell you how Charlie works—and I hope it don't get all over the league before he has a chance to hurl. Charlie has the greatest motion toward first base of any pitcher that ever stepped in a box. That's—eh—all he has got so far, but it will do. He walks the first man up, see? Then he picks him off first base with a lightning throw! One out, no hits! He gives the second man a free ticket and—zippo—he catches *him* off first! Two out, no hits! He passes the third guy, and—zam!—the old stuff——"

"Throws into the bleachers, eh?" I butts in.

"No—no!" says Andrew, frownin' and wavin' me off. "Let *me* tell it, will you? Now I got to start all over again. He walks the first——"

"Never mind," I cuts him off. "I got two out—what does he do with the third man?"

"Walks him," says Andrew, "and catches him off first. There you are—three out, no runs, no hits, no——"

"No peace for the first baseman," I finished for him. "That's a great system. I wonder nobody ever thought of it before. Why, the best Cobb, Wagner, Speaker, and them guys could hit would be .160 in a good season. I suppose Charlie has had that thing patented or I'd steal it and bet some of these guys I could hurl a no-hit game myself. As I make it, Charlies goes in there and issues twenty-seven passes in a nine-innin' game—and shuts the other team out. Son—that's pitchin'!"

"Well," pipes Andrew, grinnin' and throwin' out his chest, "I tried to tell you he was *there,* but you couldn't see it. Do you want to sign him here or after the game this afternoon?"

"Wait!" I tells him. "Don't crowd me! I don't think I can sign Charlie on this trip. I'd like to have him around, but all he'd need would be a catcher and a first baseman—and, you know, the fielders would get stale from not gettin' any work when he was out there—eh—givin' free tickets to first."

"You don't want him?" yells Andrew, like he can't have heard it right.

"You said it!" I says. "I'd always be afraid he might miss the first guy—or the first baseman might boot one of his bullet throws. Then where would Charlie be with two on, for instance?"

"He never misses," Andrew comes back. "He never missed a guy off first in his life. If the first baseman is a bum and drops the throw—that ain't Charlie's fault, is it?"

"No," I says, "it ain't—and if some simp comes up to bat, and, instead of acceptin' a pass from Charlie, slams the pill into the left-field stand for a home run—no jury would hold Charlie responsible, once he told 'em he meant to walk the guy. Look here—suppose the other team gets wise to his system, and the first guy Charlie walks refuses to take a lead off first—just stands right on the sack until the next

man is passed. The third guy does the same thing, and that leaves Charlie with three on and none out. What does he do then?"

"Heh?" chirps Andrew, scratchin' his head. "Why—eh—he—eh—— Say! What's the use of bringin' up things that can't happen? I'll tell you what I'll do. If you really want Charlie, I'll let you take him for two hundred dollars a month until he makes good. After that I'll talk business with you. What do you say?"

"I'll say this," I answers. "Can't Charlie talk for himself?"

"What does he want to talk for?" asks Andrew. "He'll do whatever I say as long as you let him pitch. Anything I do is all right to Charlie."

"Fine!" I says. "Then take him away from that box so's we can get a work-out this mornin' and I'll be satisfied."

Andrew stands lookin' at me with his hands on his hips for a minute, and then he sighs and shakes his head.

"All right, boss," he pipes. "We're through. I always thought the big-league races were on the level, but I see now they're not."

"What d'ye mean?" I asks.

"Well," he tells me, "if you guys were really tryin' to win the flag, you'd jump at Charlie, because there's a boy that would cinch the world's series for you. But I guess they nominated somebody else to win this year—and I picked the wrong one. Come on, Charlie!"

Charlie throws down his mitt and comes on, and the pair of them start out of the grounds with the bunch givin' them the large laugh. Just before they reach the gates, Andrew turns around and holds up Charlie's arm.

"Hey!" he hollers across the diamond. "Want him for one hundred dollars a month?"

"No," I yells back. "I wouldn't take him if he paid his own fare around the circuit. Take him down to the wharf and see if you can auction him off there."

Mason comes up to me after they have beat it and touches me on the shoulder.

"Who sent you that bird?" he wants to know.

"Search me," I says, "but whoever it was will have to pay the expressage, because I just sent him back."

"I suppose he wanted a million a week to work, eh?" he asks.

"No," I tells him. "He was willin' to go in there and try for one hundred a month, but——"

"What?" yells Mason, grabbin' my arm. "A hundred? Well, I sure would grab him then, boss, because he's worth that to any man's team. He'll be one of the biggest drawin' cards in baseball in a few weeks and——"

"Stop it!" I cuts in. "This guy would last about one innin' against a high-school nine. All he's got is a bean ball and a wild pitch. I don't think he could pitch quoits and——"

"Who said anything about him pitchin'?" demands Mason.

"Andrew," I tells him.

"Andrew?" says Mason, lookin' puzzled. "Who's Andrew—Carnegie?"

"No," I says, "Andrew is this bird's barker, brother, backer, and manager; likewise, owner."

Mason shakes his head.

"That's all past me," he says, "but I think this fellow is a good buy and you're overlookin' a bet by lettin' him get away from you. You know yourself that a guy like that is a big boost to any team. He gets in the papers and brings out the crowds. Why——"

"You and No-hit Charlie must belong to the same lodge," I butts in, "if you got the idea that any guy can go in there and win by issuin' passes to everybody that stands at the plate——"

"I ain't talkin' about him *pitchin'*, am

I?" cries Mason. "I guess you don't make me. I'll bring him over here right away, and when he gets through if you don't want him, I'll carry him along myself."

"Well," I says, "I won't be able to see his act until to-morrow, because I just give him the gate and he's probably halfway back to the old farm by this time."

"Yes?" pipes Mason. "Don't kid yourself. He's right under the grand stand and—wait!"

He stops, sticks his fingers in his mouth, and lets out a whistle that would have made an auto horn quit. Before the noise has died out, Charlie and Andrew are creepin' out from under the grand stand, walkin' toward us and smilin' like a couple of tooth-powder ads.

"Charlie," says Mason, "show Mr. Mac the divin' sea lion."

The smile goes away from Charlie's face like it was rubbed off with an eraser; he sighs and looks at Andrew, who steps in front of him.

"Don't you want to see him pitch?" he says.

Mason waves him away.

"Say, fellah," he tells him, "don't butt in, will you? You're only *with* Charlie, that's all. Mr. Mac has seen Charlie pitch. Now he wants to see the divin' sea lion."

"Wait a minute!" I cuts in. "This thing has gone far enough. If I want to see any divin' sea lions, I'll go to the zoo. Get this Andrew guy to take his brother and the performin' seals out of the park so's we can limber up a little before the pastime this afternoon. I——"

But Charlie has started to work. He throws his hat up in the air, flaps his long, skinny arms up and down a couple of times, barks—and then dives into the grass, slidin' along on his face for about ten feet. Then he squirms along the ground, movin' his arms and legs like he's swimmin'.

I got to give it to this guy; he was funny! There ain't a smile on his face; he's as serious about the thing as consumption, but he's got everybody else in the park doubled up. He jumps up, puts his hands out on the side of each ear, and makes a noise like a mule. He crows like a rooster, grunts like a pig, meows like a cat, and winds up with a funny fall that would have broken the average guy's neck. When he gets all through he dusts off his clothes and stands over beside Andrew, lookin' off into the bleachers like it's a sad world.

"Well, what d'ye say now?" yells Andrew. "He can do all that and more on days when he ain't pitchin'—all for one hundred dollars a month! We ain't showed you half what we got, either; that stuff is just a drummer's sample. You ought to see Charlie's imitation of a guy fallin' out of an airship into a submarine the while cleanin' his teeth with a shoe brush. All his stuff is guaranteed new and original like that. Go on, Charlie!" he winds up, grabbin' the one-man circus by the arm. "Show him somethin'!"

"Never mind, Charles!" I stops him. "I got enough. It's costin' us both money every minute you stay here. What *you* want to do," I says to Andrew, "what *you* want to do is to hire a lot somewhere, put a tent around Charlie, and wind him up. Then you stand outside sellin' tickets."

"I wish I could, at that," Andrew comes back. "I'd have made a million with this guy long ago if he'd listen to me. He could have been in vaudeville or with a circus at a princely salary, as we say at the drug store, but no! He's so crazy over this other stuff he can't even think of anything else."

"What other stuff?" I asks.

"Pitchin'," says Andrew. "All I hear from him day and night is, 'I

wanna pitch!' Can you beat it? D'ye think if *I* had the art that guy has, I'd want to be hangin' around with a lot of ball players?"

"Search me," I says. "I don't know your habits. I'll tell you what you do; you take this guy around here and there this mornin', and if you don't sell him, bring him back after the game this afternoon and I'll see what I can do."

"Boss," Andrew tells me, "I'd like to clean this deal up right now. Delays are dangerous, and he who hesitates will get called out on strikes. Rather than take a chance on losin' the sale, you can have Charlie the way he stands—that is, aside from them pants, which belong to me and come extra—you can have him for ninety-four dollars and seventy-five cents a month."

"I can't use no guys without clothes," I says. "I'm runnin' a ball team and not a musical comedy. Let the pants stay and I'll call it ninety-five dollars flat and give Charlie a chance. He gets one month to deliver, and if anything breaks I'll send him back to you—collect."

"Fair enough," agrees Andrew. "But try not to can him in St. Louis or Washington—because it would cost more than I'd care to go just now to get him back."

He walks over to friend Charles and slaps him on the chest.

"All right," he tells him. "I fixed it up. When Mr. Mac gives you that ninety-five bucks at the end of the month, what are you goin' to do?"

Charlie sighs again, and looks at Andrew like a kid repeatin' a lesson.

"Go to the post office," he says.

"That's right," smiles Andrew. "And then what?"

"Send you half my salary," pipes Charles.

Andrew frowns.

"Try it again," he says.

"Send you eighty dollars," gulps Charlie.

The smile comes back to Andrew's face, and he pats Charlie on the arm.

"I guess you're ready," he says. "Now you want to make a showin' the first chance you get and make yourself solid with Mr. Mac. Give 'em everything you got, and don't be afraid to throw in a little extra stuff every now and then. That's about all—except, don't go runnin' around with that other fifteen bucks; there's nothin' in this sportin' life, take it from me!"

"Do I pitch?" asks Charlie.

"What do you care?" pipes Andrew. "You should worry as long as you take in that ninety-five a month. Well—good-by and good luck! Don't let 'em kid you, and don't take no Canadian dimes."

He walks over to me and points at Charlie.

"You got somethin' extra special there, boss," he says, "and if you use him right he'll last a lifetime. Give him plenty of work and make him show you his imitation of a dyin' swan—that's the best thing he does and has made guys with lockjaw laugh."

"Tell me this before you rush off," I asks him. "Can he pitch with one hand and do these imitations with the other?"

"I never tried him at that," says Andrew, "but I wouldn't be surprised if he could. Anyhow, *you* can try him at it if you want. He's yours now for as long as you send in the ninety-five a month. The only way I want to hear about him is through them little trick blue slips they cash at the post office."

"D'ye mean to say you expect this fellow to come across with all but fifteen bucks of his pay check every month?" I asks him.

"No," he tells me. "I don't *expect* he will; I know it. I been keepin' him for the past three years, while he was sittin' up nights, turnin' down jobs and figurin' out this no-hit pitchin' system

of his. I got a right now to look for a little comeback, ain't I?"

With that he breezed out the gate.

Well, I drag Charles around to the clubhouse and get him inside a uniform. Nothin' I had in the lockers even tried to fit him, and the best I could do was to get him hooked up with one that looked like a steal from Charlie Chaplin. If he was funny lookin' before, you should have flashed him then; he was a knock-out! When he has hooked the last safety pin that's holdin' him and the layout together, he faces me and says:

"Do I pitch to-day?"

"Take it easy, son," I tells him; "don't be so ambitious. What's the matter—ain't they breakin' fast enough for you? I don't see where you got any moan comin'. I never saw you before in my life till about an hour ago, and now you're on the pay roll. That's action, ain't it?"

"Do I pitch to-morrow?" he asks in that same slow, sleepy voice.

"Maybe, maybe," I answers. "That's too far off to worry about now. The first thing you want to do is go out and show one of them second-string backstops of mine what you got. Then——"

"Do I pitch the day after to-morrow?" he breaks in, payin' no attention to me.

"Let me do this, will you?" I yells, commencin' to part with my goat. "You'll get a chance in due time, but first you——"

"When *do* I pitch?" he says.

"Say!" I hollers, and he jumps a foot off the ground and backs away. "Lay off that stuff! You'll have me doin' it in a minute. When you're goin' to pitch, I'll see that you're properly tipped off in advance. Come on out here now and let's see what you got."

He don't answer—just shakes his head kinda sad and hobbles along beside me to the diamond. I called over Engle, a substitute catcher, told him to get on a mitt and give me the low-down on Charlie. While we're waitin' for him to barricade his person so that if Charlie was real good there'd be no loss of life, Charlie nails me again.

"There's just one thing I would like to get straight," he says, "and then I won't ask you anything else. I ain't much of a talker, anyhow; I'm a pitcher. What I want to know is, have I got any chance of pitchin' at *all?*"

"Listen!" I tells him. "That's just what I'm goin' to find out now. If ou got anything at all, I don't see how you can miss stayin' out of the box. I need pitchers like a baby needs milk, and you'll get all the work you can handle. You can start every other day if you——"

"I could start *every* day!" interrupts Charlie. "And if you're short-handed I wouldn't mind handlin' a double-header by myself. Any time *I* start it means a shut-out for the other team. You see, I walk the first man up and then I catch him off first base, then I let the next man——"

"I know! I know!" I butts in. "Andrew give me your secret, so don't bother goin' through it again; you'll only get all tired out for nothin'. But have you got anything else besides wide ones? Don't you ever use a speed ball or a curve or a floater or——"

"I don't need them things," pipes Charlie. "I guess Andrew didn't explain fully what I do. I don't need anything but what I got, because I always walk the first man and then I catch him off——"

"All right! All right!" I shuts him off. "Here's Engle. Show him what you got."

About half an hour later I see Charlie goin' into the clubhouse, and Engle comes walkin' over to me with a funny kind of a look on his face.

"Well, Joe," I asks him, "how does the new guy shape up?"

"What club did you steal *him* from, boss?" he wants to know.

"No club," I tells him. "I bought him this mornin' from his brother."

"Yeh?" says Engle. "Well, then, this guy's brother is the champion salesman of the world. He ought to be able to go up to the north pole and clean up a fortune sellin' ice to the Eskimo—or he could hop over to the Sahara Desert and peddle fur overcoats if——"

"Listen!" I butts in. "I don't care nothin' about this guy's brother. Has Charlie got anything?"

"Has he got anything?" answers Engle. "Sure! He's got red hair, one of my cigarettes, a wind-up that would make a windmill quit, and a system for pitchin' no-hit games that——"

"Wait!" I stops him. "Can he pitch?"

"W-e-l-l," drawls Engle, "I wouldn't just call it pitchin'. He gets rid of the pill all right, but his control reminds me of a runaway horse. Out of thirty balls he hurled at me, the nearest one to my mitt went into the bleachers, and when I asked him to steady down a bit and keep 'em in the park he——" Engle stops and snickers. "Ha! Ha!" he says. "This guy is a riot!"

"What did he do then?" I asks.

"He told me his system for pitchin' no-hit games," Engle goes on, "and it's a knock-out! It goes like this—he walks the first man and then nails him off first; he walks the second and——"

"That's enough!" I cuts in. "I heard that thing so many times to-day I could get up at three o'clock in the mornin' and recite it backward. I guess I'll send for Andrew to come around and collect Charlie after the game. This Andrew person must be one of them mesmerizers; he certainly put the bee on me!"

I didn't flash Charlie again until just before the game that afternoon. He blows into the clubhouse with that same sad look on his face and comes right up to me.

"Do I pitch this afternoon?" he says.

"No, Charles," I tells him, "you don't! I don't think you're quite ripe yet, and I'm goin' to save you for the first tight game; then I'll send you in to sew it up for us. I think your arm needs a little more bakin' out from what——"

"My arm is all right now," says Charlie, holdin' it up to prove it. "I don't need to be as limber as those other guys because I don't rely on speed. I walk the first one and——"

"Say!" I yells. "Will you lay off that stuff before I go dippy?"

"I'm only tellin' you my system," he says. "Do I pitch to-morrow?"

"No," I hollers. "Where does Andrew live? Is it far from the park?"

"No," comes back Charlie. "When *do* I pitch?"

"Never!" I shrieked, dancin' around him. "Never! I'm off you—you and your system will stay right here when we go away! Engle had your brother right; after unloadin' you on me, he ought to be able to sell grape juice in a brewery!"

Charlie just looks at me kinda sad and rubs the end of his beak with his hand.

"Can I stay here and see the game this afternoon?" he asks finally.

Y'know, he looked so downhearted and stupid standin' there that as long as I was goin' to put the rollers under him, I didn't have the heart to refuse. I let him stay to watch the pastime from the bench.

I'm glad I did. It made Charlie famous, pulled the club out on the right side of the books at the end of the season, and give me a rep as a foxy manager.

No, Charlie didn't go in there and save the game in the ninth innin' or any of that bunk! This is a true story and not a movie. Charlie never laid

his hands on a baseball from that day until——

I'm takin' too big a lead off the bag. First let me tell you how Charlie come through.

The Indians got two runs in the first and we didn't get a hit, but in the second, after Harmon has steadied and retired them on six pitched balls, Mason fouls about eight and then slams out a triple. I beat it for the third-base coachin' line, and just as I got there I hear a roar from the crowd. I see Mason laughin' and the guy playin' third for the Indians is all doubled up. I didn't get it till I looked over at the bench in the dugout.

It was Charlie!

He's standin' out in front of the grand stand with a bat in his hand, swingin' at an imaginary ball. He takes a healthy clout at the air, falls flat on his face, and the crowd yells with joy. Then Charlie gets up and makes another swipe at this invisible pill; he makes out he hit it this time, and he starts like a race horse for a make-believe first. He swings around and pretends he's runnin' the bases, finally takin' a slide that would have crippled anybody else, and goin', feet first, into the bench. He jumps up—acts like he's been called out and is givin' the umpire an argument—and everybody in the stands is walkin' all over each other to watch him. The Indians' pitcher starts to laugh, hurls the pill a mile over the catcher's head, and Mason scores from third.

Then Charlie starts in again, egged on by the fans. This time he pulls an imitation of a guy walkin' a tight rope, balancin' himself with a bat and doin' all the old stuff like takin' off his coat and puttin' it on again while tiptoein' up and down the foul line back of first base. Finally he runs along the bench, dives off headfirst, lands on his shoulders, and pretends he's swimmin'. When he stands up he got a round of applause that would have tickled Roosevelt.

We finish the innin' a run behind and go out on the lot; but, on the level, I don't think the crowd cared whether we was playin' baseball or chess; they wanted Charlie. They yelled and screamed for him till he comes out of the dugout and bows, very dignified and solemn. Then he picks up the tail of his coat and walks back to the bench, movin' his neck in and out like a chicken.

Off goes the mob again, pleadin' for more at the top of their voices.

Well, as they say in the show business, Charlie stopped the performance; he had to keep up that nutty stuff all through the game, because they wouldn't let him go. Every time he stuck that long neck and red head of his out of the dugout, the crowd flashed him and yelled till he give them some more.

After the game the newspaper bunch mobs Charlie, takin' pictures of him doin' these different stunts, and when they found he was a local boy—well, they just eat him up.

That night the papers had two columns on the ball game and three on Charlie and his no-hit system—and with two wars and a graft scandal goin' on, too!

Y'know, I been runnin' ball teams long enough to know that while baseball is the national pastime and the grand old game, and all that stuff, it's just as much a business as operatin' a butcher shop. You gotta be up in the first division by August—and climbin', or the old turnstiles out at the box office will start to miss revolutions like a balky motor, and the boys back of your club will commence lookin' for an out.

Well, we wasn't in the first division and we needed somethin' to keep the grand stands from bein' blown away, because some days when we had a

series at home with another second-division trailer the crowd in the bleachers looked like gnats on the city-hall roof. Y'know that ain't bringin' in any of them little old dividend things, and the backers was yellin' for the oil.

Charlie was it! I knew the Cleveland newspaper guys would flash Charlie's act all over the circuit, and when we got home again there would be a few come out to see if Charlie checked up to the advance press dope.

I grabbed him away from the last newspaper guy who was tryin' to get him to hold a position standin' on his ear or somethin', and I says:

"Charlie, I take it all back. I ain't goin' to ask waivers on you yet. You stay till we get back home to our own lot, anyhow, and if you go as big there as you did here to-day, I'm liable to sign you for the rest of the season."

"All right," says Charlie like he didn't care one way or the other. "When do I pitch?"

"Heh?" I asks him. "Oh, wait a while. There's lots of time for that. What d'ye want to go out there and get your arm sore for when you can get away with this kind of stuff?"

"Because!" he comes back, raisin' his voice for the first and only time while I knew him. "Because I ain't no clown; I'm a pitcher! I don't like this makin' a fool of myself, but I got to eat. Some day I'm goin' out there and pitch, and you'll be sorry you didn't use me before. I'll be the greatest pitcher in the world some day; I probably am *now*, only I don't get no chance to show it. Just think, I can pitch a no-hit, no-run game every day! I don't need no fielders because I let the first man walk, catchin' him off first base, then I pass——"

I beat it away from there. I was afraid if I stayed I would slam him.

Well, all along the route Charlie knocked 'em dead. He got better every day, and two or three times they had to stop the game and put him off the field, because he had everybody laughin' so hard they couldn't play ball. He still kept beggin' me to let him go in and hurl one game, and I kept puttin' him off until finally we get back home to start a series with St. Louis.

The crowd that turned out to welcome us home could all have ridden to the park in the same automobile, and when you figure that about half of them was deadheads you can get an idea of how I felt, but I looked at Charlie and cheered up. I kept him in the clubhouse until the third innin', and then I sent him out in front of the bleachers.

He hadn't been workin' a minute before the crowd was for him to a man. He never was better, and he give them everything he had and a few new numbers he had doped out comin' in on the train. We shut out St. Louis—7 to 0—and after the game the crowd cheered Charlie like he had made all our runs.

The papers reviewed Charlie the next mornin' like he was the openin' of a new show at some theater that was a big advertiser, and that afternoon we drew eight thousand paid admissions. We put up a game that would have made a semi-pro team look like the Red Sox, pull six errors and lose 9 to 1. But Charlie showed up with a wooden horse, a lot of paper balloons, and a trick suit of clothes. He started to work before the game and quit when he couldn't stand up no more.

The next day was a Saturday, and fifteen thousand come out to see—Charlie!

Then I lost him!

Among that mob was some movie magnate who watches Charlie from the grand stand for two innin's. Then he calls over one of the special cops and sends my meal ticket a note—that was all!

After the game, Charlie braces me in the clubhouse.

"I got bad news for you," he says. "I'm goin' to quit your team!"

"What d'ye mean quit?" I asks. "Where are you goin'?"

"I'm goin' to work for the Flicker Feature Film Company—that's movin' pitchers!" he says.

"*Movin'* pitchers?" I asks him. "What kind are they—left-handers?"

"Pitchers—pitchers!" he tells me. "Don't you know what a pitcher of somebody is?"

"I got you now," I says. "You mean photographs, eh? Well, what's that to me? D'ye mean to say you're goin' to leave me flat after I practically made you? Ain't you been treated all right here?"

"Except that you wouldn't let me pitch," he says, "I ain't got no kick comin'. But this man is goin' to pay me a hundred dollars a week. That's better than ninety-five a month; I figured it out. I'm goin' to save all the money I can get my hands on and tell Andrew I'm only gettin' fifty. Then when I get enough money saved up, I'm goin' to buy a baseball team of my own!"

"What d'ye want with a ball team?" I asks him, still kinda dazed.

"So's I can pitch," he says. "So's I can go in there and try out this system of mine. When you hear of a fellow that's settin' the country wild by pitchin' no-hit, no-run games, you can say: 'Well, that's Charlie! And I could have had him myself!'"

I argued with him, pleaded, threatened, and even wired Andrew to come on and help me force Charlie to stay, but nothin' doin'! That hundred a week beat me, and the only way Charlie would stay was if I'd let him pitch. If I *had* sent him in the box, there'd have been a new home-run record made in that innin' and I might have lost my job.

Then Andrew comes on, hears how much money Charlie is goin' to get, and faints! When he come to he yells: "What did I tell you?" and drags Charlie bodily out of the park.

In a month they was namin' streets, cigars, and babies after Charlie. They had his picture on billboards all over the country, and even made little statues of him to bring home to the kids. He had these other movie comedians lookin' like pallbearers, and they couldn't make reels fast enough for the theaters that was yellin' for Charlie MacSmith features. At the end of the year I seen in the paper where he was getting thirty-five hundred dollars a week.

He nearly run over me with his automobile one day on Broadway.

That was the last I saw of Charlie.

I was talkin' to Harry Davis, of the Athletics, last week before the doubleheader in Philly. He'd had charge of a bunch of recruits that went barnstormin' through the South durin' the exhibition season. Durin' the fannin' bee, Harry says:

"You know that trip of the second-string bunch made a new record, don't you? We only dropped one game. We played a team in Palm Beach made up of them rich guys that go there for the winter—and they shut us out 1 to 0! But the funny part of it was—we got two on with none out in the ninth, and the guy that's managin' the other outfit yanks out his good pitcher and goes in himself. He was a long, skinny guy, and he didn't have nothin' but a wind-up, yet he retires the side without a hit! What d'ye think this guy did?"

I jumped off the chair and yelled at Harry:

"I don't *think!* I know! He walked the next three guys and nailed them all off first!"

**We expect to have the Witwer brand of baseball story all summer.**

# The Indiscretion of Holy Burgoyne

By Howard Fielding

*Author of "Suppressed Evidence," Etc.*

**Another adventure in the unique career of Bill Harris, the whimsical, lovable ex-safebreaker, who is now manager of the Scientific Reform Association. He and his former pals in wrongdoing have big parts to play in this drama of the Burgoyne pearl mystery.**

(***In Four Parts—Part One***)

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THERE exists in the city of New York a temple to Adventure—or shall we say a factory, an establishment wherein unusual and startling experiences are made, as if by machinery designedly installed for that especial purpose. Its corporate name is the Practical Scientific Reform Association, but it is more often designated, in one way or another, by the name of its founder, Woodbury Newcomb, the world's most famous criminologist. Sufficient publicity attended its birth and many of its doings, but no news can reach everybody, and therefore the facts would better be stated here by way of introduction to the Burgoyne affair, in which the association was so strangely and so dangerously involved.

The purpose of the association is the reform of deserving convicts, those who are wrong in conduct, not in blood. It is also a detective bureau, drawing its clients from the wide circle of Newcomb's acquaintance in the highest strata of society. In founding it, the criminologist chose as his assistants three notorious and picturesque criminals whom he had encountered in the course of an adventure which has been related under the title: "Bill Harris—His Line." These men were referred to by Newcomb in a public address as the corner stone and chief pillars of the institution.

The corner stone was the well-known William Harris, formerly a cracksman, doubtless the best man in his line; Scotch-English by descent, serious-minded, like all Scotchmen, slow-witted, like a great many Englishmen; in person of a moderate stature, heavy-shouldered, somber of countenance, with a strong jaw and pale-gray eyes.

The pillars were Jack Pinney and Frank Gleason—the one dark, lean, sinuous, emotional, probably with some Latin blood, ready of speech in many different tongues; the other a tall, handsome fellow, commonly called a blond, for the sake of his yellow hair and delicately tinted skin, but with faintly discernible spots of hazel in his blue eyes, denoting the mixed nature of his ancestry and the instability of his character. Both were men of some education; both were versatile and gifted thieves.

A third pillar was presently added, a former pal of Bill's and a lesser artist in the same line; Mike Leonard by name, a clever Irishman of agreeable presence and polite address, but with a record at least twenty years long. Leonard was strongly bound to Bill by ties of friendship and gratitude, but Pinney's chief allegiance was to the devil, and Gleason's to his own image in a mirror.

At the time when the Burgoyne affair came on the carpet, the stability of the association depended on the corner stone and the pillars; Newcomb was not there to hold it up. For months he had been abroad, gripped by the maelstrom of the world war. The case of the Burgoyne pearls served, therefore, as a test of that remarkable structure which he had reared.

## CHAPTER I.

### JACK PINNEY LENDS HIS BRAINS.

THERE are days predestined to misfortune, and this was one of them—a very bad day in the rooms of the Reform Association, the atmosphere heavily charged with uneasiness and apprehension. Trouble began before Bill Harris got into his office chair, at the stroke of nine in the morning. As he was about to seat himself, his downward glance fell upon a pile of newspapers ready for his perusal, and from the topmost sheet a name in headline type of moderate size seemed to spring out, detached and vivid—the name of Woodbury Newcomb, the association's founder.

"Woodbury Newcomb Hit by Shell." Bill leaned on his hands and stared down at the paper, reading the brief, cabled account which bore a London date line, followed by the words: "From a town in France." It appeared that one of the half dozen motor ambulances which Mr. and Mrs. Newcomb had provided for service at the front had been struck by fragments of a bursting shell. The eminent criminologist, so the story ran, had been in charge of the ambulance, and had sustained a hurt not serious; he had displayed distinguished heroism, and had brought the vehicle with its freight of wounded men safely away through a hot artillery fire.

The ex-burglar read this news again and again, picturing the scene, estimating the risk, warming his heart with the printed praise of his admired friend and benefactor. Jack Pinney and Frank Gleason, coming in, saw Bill standing with his usual iron rigidity in an attitude which by this time would have broken an ordinary man's back.

"Mornin'," said Bill, giving them a corner of one eye. "Listen to this." And he read the account with solemn precision, his deep voice seeming to cause a slight vibration of all the heavy objects in the room. Pinney and Gleason listened with infinite amusement, and at the close exploded with derisive laughter. They then proceeded to remind Bill that this ambulance story, in various forms, had been used forty times in the last few months by the publicity bureaus of foreign governments whose output was precisely as reliable as a press agent's tale about the theft of a stage beauty's diamonds.

Bill could not answer them; he had read plenty of this sort of stuff, and had formed a correct judgment of its character. He perceived that his feelings had made a fool of him; he knew that the same was true of millions of men and women with better brains than his; there was nothing to be said. In silence he soberly began the day's affairs, but such sensibility as he possessed had been hurt by the deceit that had been practiced upon him, and in the succeeding hours a dim appreciation of the hopeless dishonesty of the world oppressed him, stealing the value from his work.

The effect on Gleason and Pinney was even more unfortunate, though in a different way. They were too clever to give the least credence to the published story, yet the thing itself might happen any day, and Newcomb receive a wound not trivial but mortal. What would then become of the association and their comfortable jobs? With Gleason this was only a passing thought, injurious to his stability and tending to prepare his mind for the temptation to which he was presently to be subjected. With Pinney it became the crystallizing point for dangerous ideas which he had long entertained but which had lacked definite form.

In the afternoon there came a cable message from Newcomb, who was in Paris. He made no mention of the ambulance fable to which his name had not yet been attached in France, but he said that he was leaving for the front and that for some time communication with him would be impracticable. His few firm and kindly words of advice to William Harris—that corner stone on which the whole weight of the association now reposed—had a faintly ominous ring of possible farewell. Frank Gleason passed his hand rather wildly through his beautiful yellow hair as he listened to this message, suitably intoned by Bill; but afterward with Pinney in their private room, the Apollo of reform expressed an easy confidence.

"Newcomb's too lucky," he declared. "They could play a machine gun on the boss for half a day and never tear his trousers."

Pinney did not frame a reply, his attention being otherwise engaged. The door stood open into the local manager's room, but Bill himself was not visible from Pinney's position. The person in view was Theophilus Badger, that queer old fossil, countersigning in his capacity of treasurer the day's checks which had previously been adorned with the heavy signature of William Harris. Some one closed the door from the other side, and Pinney turned to Gleason.

"If we wanted to do stunts with the association's bank balance," Jack remarked, "we couldn't ask Providence for anything softer than Badger. But do we want to?"

"Oh, I guess not," Gleason responded. "We've passed our word to Newcomb; that settles it, so far as I'm concerned. And, besides, how could we get by Bill?"

Pinney meditated, slowly shaking his head.

"Not big enough," he said, after a while. "We might have done something with it, if we'd had sense enough to play the ammunition stocks when they were going up, but we didn't. Besides, we don't carry the balances we did when Newcomb was here. Fifteen or twenty thousand—what does that amount to?"

"Not worth the trouble," Gleason assented. "I'd rather stick to my job—as long as it lasts." And upon these words the two men exchanged a glance, each looking sidelong at the other.

Pinney exhaled through his nostrils two clouds of high-priced and exceptionally poisonous cigarette smoke.

"Getting shaky, are you?" he said. "Well, there's reason. The swells are dropping us. Contributions are the lowest they've ever been. And, what's worse, we're getting very little detective business."

"It's the war, I suppose," Gleason said uneasily. "Besides, the swells are out of town now, in the middle of June. When Newcomb gets back——"

"He'll never get back," said Pinney, with decision; "not to run this show. He started the association as a personal advertisement, and it won out; he married a fortune. He has no further use for this outfit, my boy. If the swells quit us, we're lost. Newcomb

made us fashionable. Do you think Bill Harris can keep us so?"

"Not Bill, of course," said Gleason. "He's a mere passing curiosity."

"A very notable old andiron," Pinney remarked, "but you can't exhibit him forever."

"Still," Gleason rejoined, "*we* seem to have made a real hit with the smart people; at least, so far as I'm concerned, I feel——"

"Yes, I know what *you* feel," Pinney said, "but it is written that a man shall not live by vanity alone. What do you feel in your pockets? Any real money?"

"Not much," Gleason admitted, "but it comes regularly—and honestly," he added, with an effort.

"Oh, my eye!" rejoined Pinney, with contempt. "Don't be an ass. I'm speaking very seriously to you, Frank; like an elder brother. It's the weakness of men like you that they're too easily contented, too well satisfied with a little transient flattery from men, women, and luck. They don't think of the future. I tell you the day'll come when you'll look back on this opportunity and break your heart with remorse for the way you let it slip. Your acquaintance with all these millionaires will fade away like a dream, and you'll be just where you were when Newcomb picked you up. Make your play now, Frank, while this game is open, before the bank roll is blown in and the house closed forever."

"I'm awake," Gleason responded. "I'm keeping my eyes open."

"You'd better. Bill Harris is a slow man, but he won't *always* believe that Woodbury Newcomb's coming back to run our show; and when old Iron Face wakes up, what's to hinder him from looting this outfit to the last brass tack, him and Mike Leonard? I guess you wouldn't look so pretty to yourself in the glass if that should happen before you'd made your own haul. I'm not talking about the association's money, but about the chance we have, through our connection here, to win a real stake."

Gleason contorted his handsome visage in a spasm of serious thought.

"There's something in what you say," he owned; "but you're wrong about Bill. He won't touch the money, nor do anything deliberate that will throw us down. What I'm afraid of is that he'll see the finish coming and go crack a safe somewhere. If he does, and gets pinched, that'll break up the game. Or Newcomb might get killed; that would throw Bill right back into his old line."

"One way or another, the end is bound to come," said Pinney. "I'm giving you timely warning; I'm lending you my brains, Frank, in this crisis of your life, out of sheer good will."

Gleason resented, as usual, his friend's assumption of intellectual superiority.

"All right, professor," he said. "But you want to remember that you're advising me to throw Bill Harris, who's been on the level with both of us every minute. Suppose you and I go into a deal together, and I throw you? What'll you do? Squeal like a pig?"

Pinney understood that this was mere irritation, and, like a woman, he couldn't resist the temptation to increase it.

"You couldn't throw me if you wanted to, Frank," he said. "I have too great an influence over you."

"Your influence will begin to cut real ice," said Gleason, "when you show me a good thing."

The chime in the great, neighboring tower of the Metropolitan rang for the hour of five. Gleason rose.

"I've got a little stunt to do for Bill," he said. "He'll skin me alive if I miss it. Where do we eat, and when?"

"Who pays the bill, my son?" Pinney inquired. "The expense account?"

"Oh, I guess I can put it over," Gleason answered. "Bill will growl, but he got his orders from Newcomb. He has to be liberal."

"Well, in that case, the St. Regis will do," said Pinney. "It's a fair place. Meet me there at seven."

Gleason glanced through the window at the western sky, draped in dull black with wild embroidery of tarnished copper. He took his umbrella and toyed with it uneasily, hesitating by the door.

"Of course I agree with you, Jack," he said at last. "We ought to stake ourselves for life, and do it now. But don't lead me into anything risky. If you do, you'll pull that influence stuff, and it won't go. Understand? I don't want to grab anything and flit. No, sir; none of that in mine. I've been thinking of—of marriage; Newcomb's line, and not mercenary, either; I don't believe in that. Anyhow, I want something safe. This game may be going bad just now, as you say, but while it lasts I like it. The old days seem a long way off, Jack, even in so short a time, and I'd be sorry to bring them back. I've gone soft on a lot of things; I'm tamed; the wildness is all out of me. I'd feel rotten if I had to run."

"Run?" Pinney echoed, with scorn. "Not if you stick to me, my boy. I take no risks."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE BURGOYNE PEARLS TEMPT FIVE MINT JULEPS.

After Gleason's departure, Pinney sat alone, meditating, planning, and so sliding into dreams, the actual world agreeably modified and now an easy field for miracles of swift finesse and of impenetrable cunning. Imaginary millions had been reaped in this alluring vision when a door opened and Bill Harris intruded the grim reality of his countenance.

"I'm quittin'," he said. "So long."

"Eh?" said Pinney, blinking like a man just wakened. "What's that?"

"I'm through," said Bill. "'By, Jack." And he closed the door.

The farewell was merely ceremonial for the close of day, and in Bill's usual manner, but somehow it got on Pinney's nerves. He had no rational apprehension that Bill would walk away with the funds of the association, but somehow he seemed to see him doing it; and Pinney paced the floor, attended by very unpleasant fancies, till the advent of a red-armed woman with her brooms and dusters reminded him that it was time to go home and dress for dinner.

Outdoors, the electric lamps were shining here and there, though by the clock and season it should have been broad daylight. The bluish rays quivered in a copper-tinted haze which seemed to have a taste and to parch one's throat. The vanguard of the six-o'clock slaves, hurrying home through Madison Square, held their mouths open, and every face wore an expression of thirst. It was difficult to resist this suggestion, but Pinney had a rule of life against solitary drinking, and before he could decide where to break it, destiny intervened.

He saw a very elegant touring car halted at Twenty-sixth Street with the northbound traffic on the Avenue and standing next the curb. On the rear seat, alone, was a somewhat dissipated young gentleman of the smart set, Holden Terry Burgoyne, known since college days as "Holy Terror," or "Holy" for short. He was dressed in mourning; wore no hat, according to his custom, and his bronze-hued hair glinted in the peculiar light. His lean, smooth-shaven face, straight in the outlines, a little too muscular in the jaw, wore its usual expression of repressed ferocity, and he was looking at the traffic policeman as if he meant to get out and kill him. But, seeing Pinney coming out

of the park, his countenance changed instantly and put on a gratified and welcoming look. He waved a hand, and then pushed open the door of the car as Jack approached.

"How are you, Mr. Pinney?" he said, shaking hands and pulling Jack aboard. "I'm particularly glad to see you. We'll go and have a drink."

"Thank you," said Pinney, somewhat dubiously, for he had had a memorable experience with this gentleman some months ago. "I've time for just one, perhaps."

"I never count 'em," responded Holy, "but it's my impression that I generally *begin* with one, and I am now on the point of doing it."

He made room for Pinney, who narrowly missed sitting down on what seemed to be a five-pound box of candy which lay on the seat. It was wrapped in thin white paper, and tied with a gold cord; and, as Pinney put it aside, he noticed that the wrapper was not so neat and fresh as it might have been; it had a used look. Yet this must be a present for a woman, if the contents really were candy.

Burgoyne half rose and leaned forward, giving an order to the chauffeur, a stolid, powerful Swede; and Pinney took occasion to turn the box over, thus discovering that the wrapper was wrong side out. The name of a well-known candy maker, stamped on the thin paper, showed through, reversed. This was odd, but of no apparent importance.

"Stop at the Holland House, Nielson," said Burgoyne. And then to Jack: "I haven't seen you in quite a while; no time to look you up, though I've been in town mostly. I've been rather busy since my aunt's death."

"I ventured to send a word of sympathy," said Pinney, "through the kindness of your cousin, Miss Holden."

Burgoyne made acknowledgment with a gesture exquisitely courteous, and remote from his habitual manner; while Pinney spoke of the young lady's having called at the association's rooms with her chaperon, Mrs. Clarendon.

"As to Aunt Harriet's death," Burgoyne said, "it's a tragedy, in a way. Another social landmark gone, and a good old party, too, as ever was. Of course she didn't care to hang on any longer; glad to get away. She'd lived for society, and had seen it go to the devil, so what was the use? Blessed release. As for the harpoon she threw into me, I don't blame her. My own fault."

"You surprise me," Pinney said. "I thought you'd fared rather well, you and your cousin. She gets the famous pearls, I believe."

A queer, acid grin slowly overspread the countenance of Holy Burgoyne. His right hand groped for the candy box, and he beat a soft tattoo upon it with his finger tips.

"Yes," said he, "the will gives the beads to Cousin Anna, along with about two millions, the same as I get; but everything's in trust with old Oswald G. Saintsbury. That's the harpoon I was speaking of. We'll get what he gives us, for the next ten or fifteen years. I'll have to engage a trained nurse for some of my creditors, to keep them from committing suicide."

"Speaking of the pearls," said Pinney, "I saw them at the opera last winter, only a day or two before your aunt was taken ill."

"That must have been the paste set," said Burgoyne.

Pinney shook his head, with a smile.

"She passed quite close to me," he said, "and I'm a good judge of pearls."

"The deuce you are!" Burgoyne drummed a little harder on the candy box and studied Pinney with a sidelong look. His eyes were of a bronze hue, with a red glow, in harmony with his hair, remarkable and fascinating.

"Have you mentioned that incident?" he said.

"No," Pinney replied, and it was a lie. He had told Frank Gleason at the time, and had given his own estimate of the value of the pearls, not less than seven hundred thousand dollars.

"Well, as a favor to me, don't speak of it," said Burgoyne. "If you feel that I ought to tell you why——"

"Not at all," Pinney hastened to say. In fact, he supposed that he understood. The Burgoyne pearls were subject to an inheritance tax, and they were being appraised by Marcellus Rhinehart, of Seitz, Rhinehart & Co., under agreement between the heirs and the State comptroller. Vague rumors had reached Pinney's ears with intimations that the State would be "done," and he suspected that the eminent Oswald G. Saintsbury, for many years legal adviser of Mrs. Burgoyne, and now executor of her will, had coerced or bribed Rhinehart to undervalue the famous pearls, or even to suppress them altogether.

While Pinney turned these matters over in his mind, the car stopped at the side entrance of the Holland House, and Burgoyne, who was nearer to the curb, alighted. He took the candy box with him, and carried it into the hotel under his arm. Wild horses began to gallop in Pinney's brain. The establishment of Seitz, Rhinehart & Co.—commonly known as Seitz's—is on Fifth Avenue, south of Twenty-third Street. Burgoyne might have been there.

"I suggest mint juleps," said Burgoyne, as they came to the bar; and, though Pinney would have preferred a milder beverage, he yielded to persuasion.

Another round of juleps was consumed a few minutes later, at the Waldorf, and again the candy box was under Holy's arm as he drank. This was the case also at the McAlpin, which was the next stopping place.

By this time no rational mind could entertain the notion that the box held candy, or anything of only moderate value. What could it contain that was precious enough to inspire caution in Holy Burgoyne, the most reckless man alive? Surely a thing of great price, or one whose safety involved a special obligation of honor; an article not his own and impossible to replace. The Burgoyne pearls satisfied both branches of this conjecture, and, moreover, the suspicion of hocus-pocus in the matter of the appraisal fitted well with the trick of the candy box which Pinney now recognized as a blind, doubtless a cover for jewelry.

"My dear fellow," he said, in an affectionate tone, not wholly assumed, but issuing more or less naturally from three mint juleps, "haven't we had enough? You'll forgive me, but you're beginning to show it a little; and, as I venture to suspect that you're taking that candy to a lady——"

"To my cousin," said Burgoyne, with sudden gravity. "And you're quite right to remind me of my condition. I will attend to it."

This was what Pinney had expected and fished for; it confirmed his theory. It meant that Burgoyne was carrying the pearls secretly from Rhinehart to Miss Holden. The chance of a lifetime had come; his advice to Gleason had been inspirational, prompted by one of those mysterious echoes which a man may hear when his thought, thrown into the future, strikes against the solid reality looming close behind the fog.

Pinney's muddled brain was incapable of asking why a girl not yet out of college, staying for a little while at a New York hotel, should care to be burdened with the custody of pearls worth three-quarters of a million, or why such a wise old fox as Oswald G.

Saintsbury should permit her to have them. The size of the box, Holy's manner of handling it, the fact that it had come from the direction of Marcellus Rhinehart and was certainly going toward Anna Holden, the prompt rising of the pearls as a subject of conversation between himself and Burgoyne—these were conclusive evidences for Jack in his present state.

"Cousin Anna's staying at the Plaza, as you probably know," said Holy. "We'll have one more mint julep there."

Nevertheless he ordered the chauffeur to proceed up Broadway, instead of back toward the Avenue; and they stopped at the Knickerbocker for a fourth round of mint juleps. It was characteristic of Burgoyne that drink affected him quickly, and that a fearsome counterfeit of sobriety settled upon him after he had passed a certain point. He had no appetite for liquor; never touched it except with deliberation, nor felt the lack of it in periods of total abstinence. Pinney, watching him as a cat watches a bird which it is stalking, judged that Burgoyne was drinking to forget something which preyed on his mind, and that he had partially succeeded. He was plainly "under the influence," which revealed itself chiefly in a grim exhilaration and detachment, an ignoring of the world very favorable to the designs of Pinney on the pearls.

In fact, Burgoyne seemed to have forgotten the candy box itself, for he left it in the car when they stopped at the Hotel Astor for their fifth round. This recklessness chilled Pinney's blood, but he couldn't call Burgoyne's attention to the box, nor carry it into the hotel himself. The best he could do was to let a dust robe fall over it where it lay on the seat. He suffered torments of anxiety during their brief absence, but the box was under the robe when he scrambled into the car.

Burgoyne seemed not to know where it was, nor to care. He had passed into a sternly contemplative mood, as if he were weighing the elements of some momentous decision, but he had not ceased to be companionable nor once forgotten the requirements of courtesy.

What concerned Pinney was that Burgoyne should never be able to testify to the presence of the jewels in the car after the call at the Astor. With exquisite cleverness, despite his condition, Pinney worked the robe and the box behind him, where it would be safe from Holy's accidental touch. Nothing more could be done at the moment. To cut into the box with a knife would be hazardous, and perhaps futile; there might be a more solid container inside the pasteboard. How he was to get the pearls Jack did not know. So far as he may be said to have had a plan, it depended on the long chance of encountering Gleason on his way to the St. Regis, where he was due at seven o'clock.

It now lacked ten minutes of that hour. Gleason would long since have abandoned the idea that Pinney was coming home to dress in the apartment which they shared on Forty-fifth Street. He would have wondered what had happened, but there was no reason to suppose that he would fail to keep the engagement. This consideration had led Pinney to suggest to Burgoyne that they should cross to the Avenue directly, and as a result they were now on Forty-fifth Street, going eastward.

Looking eagerly ahead, Pinney saw two taxicabs standing side by side before the door of the house in which he lived. Pinney winked fiercely at this spectacle, and the two cabs merged into one, while several tall men on the sidewalk got together and became Frank Gleason in evening dress, alone.

It seemed important that Burgoyne should not see Gleason at this stage of the proceedings. Pinney took out

his watch, pretended to consult it, and let it fall. Burgoyne politely recovered it, but five mint juleps did not expedite the process. There was plenty of time for the car to pass Gleason, and for Pinney to signal his friend to follow and to be cautious.

At the Avenue there was the usual halt for a chance to cross and turn into the stream of northbound traffic. Gleason's cab drew up close alongside, but nothing was to be seen of its occupant except one hand whose fingers idly rapped out a bit of a tune on the top of the lowered glass of the door. The tune carried words for any one who knew how to read them. They were: "Put me wise. Play safe. Play safe."

The warning was wasted. Seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls were talking to five mint juleps, and there was a poor chance for Frank Gleason to be heard. Pinney had already got the candy box free of the dust robe and under the skirt of his coat on the side away from Burgoyne, but by this time there were half a dozen vehicles lined up behind. He could deflect Holy's attention long enough to pass the box into the cab, but how about all those witnesses in the rear? The risk was too great.

A swirl of wind laden with dust came suddenly along the street from the westward, and a dash of rain out of the cloud that had long threatened.

"Get the top on, Nielson," said Burgoyne, rising to assist.

Pinney rose also, with a wild elation in his heart. The quick spasm of excitement sobered him; he had a sense of being at his best and beyond it. Clever as most conjurors who make their living by the art, he experienced none of the trouble that an ordinary person would have had in handing an object so large as the candy box and keeping it always shielded by his body as he glided from the car like a ghost. Burgoyne was unsteadily preparing to follow him; Nielson had not yet begun to hoist himself from his seat. In a flash Pinney turned the trick, and the candy box was in Gleason's cab.

The wave of exhilaration which had borne Jack gloriously to the touch of this achievement now broke all over him in a whirlpool. He couldn't tell the top of Holy's car from the wheels, but to be doing something was a relief to his nerves. Holy was equally fuddled, equally diligent, and between them they made the patient and laborious Swede do everything at least twice. Before the work was done the tangle on the Avenue had been resolved by the traffic policeman, and Gleason's cab had floated away with the stream. Then at last Burgoyne and Pinney got aboard the car from opposite sides and fell into each other's arms in the interior gloom.

"My fault, old boy," said Burgoyne handsomely. "It's evident I need something to straighten me up. There's the University Club at Fifty-fourth Street, but it's on the wrong side, so we'll go on a block farther to the St. Regis." And he gave the word to Nielson.

The last thing in the world that Pinney wanted was another mint julep, but he was more than willing to stop at the St. Regis. The dinner engagement had blown up in a blaze of incomparable glory, but Gleason would probably permit himself to be taken to the hotel rather than attract his cabman's attention by a change of address. He might wait a few minutes in the cab, on some excuse, and communication might be possible, but Pinney had no mind to risk anything for the sake of it; his present business was to prepare for the crash that was coming, and above all to stick tighter than a plaster to Burgoyne until the loss of the pearls should be discovered.

The sooner the better now; Pinney hoped that Burgoyne would be inspired with his former caution, and would

want to carry the box into the hotel, but the cards of destiny had been stacked for a different deal. Burgoyne alighted in a state of trance, and stood looking around as if he didn't know where he was or why he had come; but presently he led the way to the bar with not a sign of physical disturbance except a tendency to walk over his fellow citizens without seeing them. Pinney had kept an eye open for Gleason's cab in vain; there were plenty of cabs, but they bore no marks of identification for a vision and a memory so confused. "And I'll certainly see no better when I come out," he thought, as he followed Holy into the hotel.

The sixth mint julep was the nickel in the slot for Burgoyne, and his peculiar mechanism responded almost instantly. He began to breathe more deeply, his eye brightened, and his countenance assumed its alert and formidable aspect. Pinney was not surprised, for he had seen the man similarly transformed on the previous occasion which has been mentioned, and he knew what must now take place.

Burgoyne slowly lifted his right hand and put it under his left elbow. Then he nodded several times.

"Did you happen to notice what I did with that box?" he asked. "Is it in the car, do you think?"

Pinney looked perplexed.

"Oh!" he said, after a nicely measured pause. "The candy? I don't remember seeing it since we called at the Knickerbocker."

"Can I have left it there?" said Burgoyne. "No, I distinctly recall its being in the car at—er—some other place —afterward."

He set down his glass.

"If the box is in the car," he said, "I shall drink no more for one year. If it's not there, I shall never touch another drop while I live."

Pinney felt an insane desire to laugh. It seemed a good joke that he, an officer of the Reform Association, should have reformed Holy Burgoyne. "If his word's any good," said Pinney to himself, "he's a teetotaler, and I've done it. For the good of his own soul and mine, I hope he sticks."

He took Burgoyne by the arm, and they walked out to the car which stood beyond the glare of lights shining down from the broad canopy over the sidewalk. Nielson did not see them; he sat with his head on his arms, supported by the steering wheel. Burgoyne did not wait, but went to the car through the rain, leaving Pinney under the canopy, which has no pillars. There was nothing for poor Jack to lean on in that harrowing moment, but he had wit enough to stay where he was, and to assume a careless demeanor. He saw Holy get in and turn on the little lamps. Then the car drew slowly ahead till it was abreast of Pinney.

"My sentence is one year," said Burgoyne, exhibiting the candy box. "It was under the seat."

The surprise almost crippled Pinney; he had difficulty in climbing aboard. He was astounded at Gleason's nerve and cleverness in restoring the box; he wouldn't have believed it; he rebelled against the undeniable fact. The dullard of the family had suddenly distinguished himself, and the smart brother enviously resented this refutation of an opinion long confidently asserted. There even flashed through Pinney's mind a form of words to nip the vanity which Frank would certainly exhibit.

And these instinctive promptings were speedily reënforced by the discovery that the wrapper of the box, which had been wrong side out, was now properly put on. Here was an error of Gleason's which might have had immediate and lamentable consequences; but Burgoyne failed to see any sign that the box had been tampered with, and he revealed no uneasiness as to its contents.

"I've told Nielson to go to the Plaza," he said. "I'll see Cousin Anna for just a moment. Wish you'd come along and dine with me afterward."

"Thank you," Pinney replied. "I'd hardly like to appear before Miss Holden just now, and I've a business engagement which will prevent my dining with you, much to my regret."

"Ride with me to the Plaza, anyhow," said Holy. "I'll have Nielson take you home while I'm making my call."

This seemed satisfactory; but when Burgoyne had got out at the Plaza he remained standing beside the car, giving no orders as to its destination. He was steady as a rock now, and he held the candy box tightly tucked under his arm. He appeared to be thinking with extreme and painful intentness. Pinney eyed him, and was perplexed; he would have said that the man was in trouble, that he was suffering acute mental distress under his inflexible crust. Finally he struck his heel down sharply on the pavement, and Pinney heard him say under his breath: "No, I'm d——d if I can do it!" Then he got into the car.

"I'll ride along with you," he said, and gave the address to Nielson.

Ten minutes later, Pinney was politely set down at his own door, and Burgoyne rode away. Why had he changed his mind at the Plaza? Where was he going with the candy box? To whom—and when—would it be delivered? Jack Pinney would have been very glad to know the answers, but another question pressed even more heavily on his mind, as to whether Gleason had had wit enough to bring the pearls home, and courage enough to wait there with such immensely valuable and dangerous goods in his possession.

As a matter of fact, Gleason was at that moment looking down from the unlighted window of their living room, where he stayed till Burgoyne's car was well out of the way. Then he turned on the lights and stood facing the door, biting hard on the stem of an empty pipe.

## CHAPTER III.

### "NOW WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PEARLS."

Burgoyne rode to Mr. Saintsbury's house on Fifty-seventh Street, east of the Avenue. The rain, which had been scanty since the first assault, now suddenly swooped down, roaring. A dash of that cold shower might be beneficial, and Holy thrust his bare head out into it as the car slowed up. It felt very good; and he was experimenting with methods for the preservation of his collar when Mr. Saintsbury's gaunt old butler came with an umbrella from the vestibule, where he had been waiting for his master's return. Burgoyne comprehended this, but in order not to cheapen the service rendered to himself, he asked whether Mr. Saintsbury was at home.

"Not yet, sir," was the reply; "but he's telephoned, and dinner's waiting. I thought you might be bringing him, sir."

Burgoyne entered the hall, and was immediately aware of his Cousin Anna's voice, which came to him from the smaller drawing-room on the left.

"Thank goodness, here's Holy," she said excitedly, "and he's got 'em!"

She confronted him as he crossed the threshold, and her aspect was decidedly stormy. Her eyes, of the same strange color as his own, but larger and brighter, blazed with the wrath that one forgives, youthful and open. Burgoyne was somewhat daunted, not by her temper, which he could have matched at any moment, but by her beauty, which always got the better of him. Behind her, waiting with interest and amusement for the scene to develop, was Mrs. Julia Clarendon, with whom Anna was staying at the Plaza.

"Hello, little cousin!" said Burgoyne. "Good evening, Julia. Are you dining with Mr. Saintsbury to-night?"

Mrs. Clarendon responded with only a bit of a laugh, and just then the hall door closed behind the butler, returning to his post of duty in the vestibule. That was what Anna had been waiting for, and she opened fire instantly:

"Holy, what do you mean by bringing my pearls here? Didn't Count di Senti tell you what I wanted you to do with them?"

Di Senti was connected with Seitz's.

"Yes," said Burgoyne, "he told me."

"Then why didn't you do it?"

"I couldn't take the responsibility, Anna."

"You'd have given them to Mr. Saintsbury." Her voice shook with wrath. "You're afraid of him, and I think it's utterly contemptible; not like you, Holy." A frozen, piratical grin appeared on Holy's countenance, and Mrs. Clarendon smothered a laugh—whereat Anna's temper rose and her eyes blazed. "The pearls are mine, and I want them!"

She put out her hand with a gesture splendidly commanding, but the candy box remained under Burgoyne's arm, clasped in football fashion. Anna cast one fiery glance at the long fingers over the end of the box. In childhood she had liked to play with her cousin, rather rough play; she had even done it quite recently, and she knew how strong he was. There was no use trying a quick grab.

She turned and walked to the other side of the room, as if she meant to do something desperate. Then she walked back again in the same manner. Her head was uncovered; there was a scarf around her shoulders which had served to protect her hair, bronze-hued, abundant, and very beautiful. The light from the chandelier played on the wavy masses, and Holy Burgoyne watched the gleam and glory of that spectacle.

"I'm as sentimental as a meat ax," he said; "but you're my little cousin, the only member of the family I never quarreled with. Can't we make a treaty about these pearls? I don't care a hoot for what old Saintsbury'll do to me; I'm only afraid you'll do something foolish. Perhaps Mrs. Clarendon can help us out."

"I suppose Anna wants the pearls as a safeguard," the lady said, "in case Mr. Saintsbury shuts off her supplies."

"Well," said the girl, "isn't that sensible? He's very likely to do it."

"For any particular reason?" Mrs. Clarendon asked, with half a glance at Burgoyne. "You haven't mentioned any to me."

Anna was silent.

"I don't quite see how you could keep the pearls," Mrs. Clarendon went on. "You're not of age, and Mr. Saintsbury's your guardian. He'd take them away from you."

"I'd like to see him get them," Anna retorted. "I'd throw them into the river."

"Or make him think you'd done so, my dear," said Mrs. Clarendon. "That would be better, wouldn't it?"

"Pretend to lose them, you mean," said Burgoyne, "then spout them on the quiet, and be independent till Saintsbury dies and there's a new deal. I couldn't advise such a game, not for Anna. She'd never put anything like that over on Saintsbury."

"It's precisely what he himself is doing, isn't it?" Anna rejoined. "Didn't he tell the State comptroller, or whatever you call him, that the pearls were stolen a year ago? That's a lie and a fraud and a crime, and we're all committing it; but I couldn't go to jail for losing my own pearls. Not that I mean to do such a thing——"

"Really I don't see why you should," said Mrs. Clarendon, "unless there's going to be a row with Mr. Saintsbury right away."

She gave a glance to Burgoyne, who was studying her shrewdly; in fact, each of them was trying to make out how much the other guessed as to the hidden motive for Anna's conduct.

"As for income," said Burgoyne, turning to his cousin, "you don't need much. You've another year in college and——"

"I'm not going back," said Anna. "I shall live in New York."

"Well, that'll raise a fuss, sure enough," Mrs. Clarendon admitted, "but it doesn't have to come till September. You're through with Radcliffe for this year, except for a few exams."

No college examination, but the one to which she was at that moment being subjected was what worried Anna. She panted with impatience and exasperation.

"Oh, we shall stand here, talking," she burst out, "and Mr. Saintsbury'll come, and that'll settle it. Can't we go to the hotel and talk there?"

Burgoyne shook his head and turned away. He couldn't look at her any longer, he felt too strongly tempted to do a foolish thing. In fact it was a folly to turn his back upon her, for she sprang after him, quick and light as a kitten, and pulled the box from under his arm.

"Now I've got it," she cried, "and I'm going to keep it." She darted out into the hall, calling over her shoulder: "Come on, Holy, if you want to. We can talk just the same."

Mrs. Clarendon, who had been attracted toward the window by a sound from without, uttered a warning that was unheard. Anna flung open the door, and crashed against Mr. Saintsbury on the threshold. The box fell from her hands and bounced into the vestibule, where the grim, old butler, very spry for his years, picked it up and gave it to his master.

"Now you'll be roasted on both sides," Mrs. Clarendon whispered to Burgoyne as he paused to let her pass before him into the hall.

Mr. Saintsbury was in his sixty-seventh year, but he was a stranger to the timidities of age. The collision had been sudden and really violent, yet there was nothing to indicate that Mr. Saintsbury had been startled. As to the candy box and the use for which it was intended, he was already informed, and he seemed not to care what his somewhat unruly ward had been trying to do with it, but he kept a good grip on it with one hand or the other while the butler was relieving him of his hat and overcoat.

His deeply furrowed face of a Scotch type, with cold blue eyes and a long upper lip, wore its ordinary expression, which was as if he were looking down with saturnine contempt upon the antics of children. Intellectual arrogance was the dominant note of his character, and he rarely suppressed it, in consultations or in courts, or even in purely social relations. A nod and a stare were his greeting to Burgoyne and Anna, but he showed a kind of cordiality toward Mrs. Clarendon, whom he had long suspected of possessing a mind. As for her beauty, he was so far sensible of it as to be slightly irritated by the knowledge that everybody admired it. An aristocrat alert for every corollary of his conviction, he did not wish to share in general applause of anything, except when perfectly assured that the inferior persons were deceived. If there had been any way of regarding Mrs. Clarendon's beauty as secretly adverse to the interests of the common people, Mr. Saintsbury would have enjoyed walking with her in crowded places.

He had once been a fine figure of a man, but was now meager with years, a fact which he refused to admit, resenting the least effort on his tailor's part to vary from the measure taken

twenty years ago. Consequently his frock coat hung in folds and creases, not much helped by his habit of stuffing all his pockets with great sheaves of documents and letters.

With scant ceremony he ushered the ladies and Burgoyne into the room which they had just left and seated them by the window. Then, without apology, he walked away, opening the candy box as he went and eventually setting it on a table in a far corner, where he looked privately at its contents. This done, he turned about, clasped his hands behind his back, and stalked slowly the length of the room again, his white old nose pointing straight at Anna.

"When and by whom," said he, halting within a pace of her, "were you informed that Mr. Rhinehart wanted to get rid of the pearls—the real ones?"

"Cousin Holy told me last evening," she replied. "He came to see me at the Plaza."

"Is that true?" the lawyer asked, turning to Burgoyne.

"My word can add nothing to Cousin Anna's," responded Holy, the more carefully chivalrous for not being quite sober. "And besides, I told you so, if you remember."

"As a result of that conversation," Saintsbury resumed, addressing Anna, "you went to Seitz's this forenoon, taking that box with you."

"Yes, sir," said she. "I thought Mr. Rhinehart might want me to smuggle the pearls out of the store, so I took the old candy box to put them in. But he wouldn't give me the pearls."

"So you asked your cousin to get them?"

"I did. He came and took us to luncheon, and I asked him then. He said that Mr. Rhinehart wouldn't give the pearls to anybody unless you told him to. Didn't Cousin Holy see you——"

"Yes," the lawyer interrupted, "and I am now investigating his story." He turned to Burgoyne. "Will you state just what happened when you went to Seitz's?"

"I saw Rhinehart, and he told me that he'd had an O. K. from you by telephone. Anna had left the candy box there, and Rhinehart got it out of his safe and gave it to me, all wrapped up, with the pearls inside."

"With the pearls inside," said Saintsbury. "How do you know?"

At this, Anna sprang up and ran to the table in the corner. White tissue paper on top to some extent concealed the deeper contents of the box, but its nature was sufficiently disclosed. Anna uttered a cry like the howl of some peculiarly melodious animal; she seized the box and turned it upside down. A shower, not of pearls, but of hardware, fell clattering to the floor—a short iron wrench, a broken pair of pincers, and the head of a hammer.

She stood for a moment staring down at this rubbish, and still holding the box aloft. Then she let it fall, and turned to face her guardian, whom she addressed at the full length of the room in a voice quite free from common tones or evidences of excitement, yet the sort of voice which is likely to reach the Archbishop of Canterbury, if he is dressing for dinner upstairs, and which doesn't care in the least. Her resemblance to her Cousin Holy was notably accentuated at this crisis.

"Mr. Saintsbury," she said, "what have you done with my pearls? You're merely pretending to question Holy. You made Mr. Rhinehart do this, and I know it, and I won't stand it. You'll have to give me my pearls. If you don't, I'll tell the whole story to everybody."

The high, clear trumpet of her tone momentarily disconcerted Saintsbury, and he hastened to reduce the range by several long paces. Holy and Mrs.

Clarendon followed him, while Anna stood her ground and waited for them.

"What story?" the lawyer demanded, recovering his poise.

"That we're cheating the State out of the inheritance tax," Anna replied. "You got Mr. Rhinehart to say that Aunt Harriet's pearls had been stolen and that we had only the paste set. I'll certainly tell this——"

"Indeed!" Saintsbury interposed. "Have you seen the pearls since your aunt's death?"

"Of course not; but didn't you just say that Mr. Rhinehart had them and wanted to get rid of them?"

"Nothing of the sort. I asked when some one told you so. Can you prove that any person has seen the real pearls since the date of the robbery?"

"Robbery!" she echoed. "There wasn't any, and we all know it. Of course I ought not to be rude like this, but you make me so. Aunt Harriet gave me her pearls because she wished me to have them—now, while I'm young. It isn't right for you to deprive me of them, and I'm simply driven to tell you again that I won't stand it."

Saintsbury shook his finger at her.

"Can you *prove* anything?" he demanded. "No, you can't, and I'll see to it that you don't try."

"There's my evidence, you know," Holy remarked. "Cousin Anna'll have that, whatever it's worth. I saw the pearls this afternoon."

"Then I'll be gratified if you'll account for their disappearance," the lawyer retorted. "Your evidence, indeed! If you were absurd enough to give it publicly, I should have some trouble to keep you out of jail. Sit down, all of you. I wish to continue the examination." He turned again to Burgoyne. "You haven't answered my former question. How do you know that the pearls were in the box?"

"Because I opened it."

"For what reason?"

"The ladies will pardon me if I mention the reputation of Mr. Rhinehart," Holy responded. "It happened to drift athwart me like a breath from the subway at six in the afternoon. So I looked at the pearls."

"In Mr. Rhinehart's presence?"

"No, sir. Di Senti happened to come in, and I went into the adjoining office."

"Count di Senti's?"

"Rhinehart lets him use the room, I believe. It's not his especially."

"Did he go in with you?"

"No, sir," said Holy. "I was alone."

"Alone," Saintsbury repeated the word. "Then no one else saw the pearls; no one saw what you did?"

Burgoyne assented with a gesture.

"Well," said the lawyer, with thinly veiled satisfaction, "what *did* you do, as a matter of fact?"

"I wrapped up the box again, and took it away. No," he anticipated Saintsbury's question, "I didn't show the pearls to anybody, nor set the box down, nor let it out of my clutches. I took it, and went out to my car."

"Who was in the car?"

"Nobody but Nielson."

"Where did you go after leaving Seitz's?"

"I went and lost Anna's pearls," Burgoyne replied. "Just how I did it I don't know, but I accept the responsibility. If the pearls are not recovered immediately, of course I'll pay Anna the full value from my share of the estate."

"In money?" the girl asked excitedly. "But you can't. Mr. Saintsbury won't let you. And I wouldn't take it, anyhow, if you really lost the pearls by accident."

Mr. Saintsbury ignored the interruption. He pointed that ivory dart, his old forefinger, at Burgoyne, repeating his unanswered question:

"Where did you go?"

"In the language of the school geog-

raphies," said Holy, "I took a winding northerly course to the Hotel Plaza."

"Why, Holy, what time was this?" Anna interposed. "We waited till after six, and then I got frightened, thinking you might come here——"

Saintsbury cut her short, addressing Burgoyne.

"So you didn't bring these ladies," said he. "What *did* you do?"

"Nothing. I got out of my car and then got in again, and rode down the Avenue."

"For what purpose?"

"To take a gentleman home," said Burgoyne. "I had picked up Mr. Pinney at Twenty-sixth——"

"Jack Pinney!" exclaimed Mrs. Clarendon. "Thank Heaven! Now we know what happened to the pearls."

It may be remembered that Mrs. Clarendon was a participant in those adventures which led to the founding of Newcomb's Association. She had known Harris, Gleason, and Pinney in their unregenerate state, before the famous shepherd of black sheep chose them to be his own little flock. The acquaintance with these men took rank among the most amusing and most valued of the lady's varied experiences; she rarely failed to visit the association's rooms whenever she was in town; in fact, she had called on Local Manager Harris within the current week.

"Pinney's quite out of it," said Burgoyne. "He was never alone with the box for an instant; never out of my sight. You're only guessing, Julia. Don't you see that you're accusing this man of stealing five pounds of candy? He didn't know what was in the box."

"What Jack Pinney knows, and what you think he knows, are two very different things," she rejoined. "I've had experience of that. Anyhow, he's under suspicion, and that's all we care about. The association is in a mess, and Bill Harris will have to get it out by finding the pearls." She rose. "I'll send him here as soon as I can find him."

Mr. Saintsbury had no appetite for confidential dealings with Bill Harris, whom he knew by reputation, and naturally distrusted. The man's obscure origin and criminal past were less offensive than his present status as a popular character associated with reform. The words "popular" and "reform" were marked for special hatred and contempt in Mr. Saintsbury's private lexicon.

But there was really no alternative to Mrs. Clarendon's suggestion. It was manifestly impossible to consult the police, and though Mr. Saintsbury had employed private-detective agents in very delicate matters, there was none to whom he cared to tell the story of the pearls. Virtually he would have to be his own detective in this case, and it might be well to begin by questioning and, if possible, intimidating Harris.

"Can I reach this man by telephone?" he asked, but Mrs. Clarendon interposed a strenuous objection.

"You mustn't talk to Bill Harris till I've prepared his mind," she said. "You couldn't make a dent in him. I'll go to his rooms, and, if he's out, I'll hunt him up. Pray Heaven I find him at dinner, for otherwise I shan't get any. Holy, will you take Anna somewhere?"

"I don't want any dinner," the girl declared. "I'm going back to the Plaza and shut myself into my room. I don't want to see anybody, not even you, Cousin Julia, till I get over this. Holy'll stay here; Mr. Saintsbury wants to talk to him."

The lawyer nodded, and Burgoyne groaned. He offered his car to Mrs. Clarendon, but she preferred to take a cab. When it had come, Burgoyne put the two ladies aboard, and he took occasion to say, by way of a message to

Bill Harris, that he was unalterably convinced of Pinney's innocence and would so testify before gods and men.

"And as to your pearls, Anna," he added, "I wish you could know how I feel. I'm a reckless beggar in general, but I hope the devil will fly away with me if I'm ever really careless of your interests. What I've done is done, but I'll try to make it up to you some day."

What Anna said was lost in the musty inwards of the cab, from which, five minutes later, she alighted at the Plaza. But she did not go to her room. Instead, she passed swiftly through the hotel and to another cab, in which she rode down the Avenue not very far behind Mrs. Clarendon.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PINNEY IS CAST DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED.

The Burgoyne pearls were the largest stake in jewels that Jack Pinney had ever played for, and beyond comparison with any he had ever won. After such a job a man's mind seems to halt while the details of the performance overtake him and rush through his memory in a flood which his will can neither guide nor check.

Pinney, on his way home, had been constrained in this manner to review what he had done and to contemplate himself in the act of turning out his masterpiece. There were fleeting pangs of fear, moments of false recollection when he shrank aghast from fatal errors which he hadn't committed; but none of these phantoms had the least stability, and the ease with which he banished them increased his self-congratulation.

Vanity and mint julep are able to occupy the same space at the same time, and Pinney was full of both. It was much the same to him as if he had evoked the pearls from Rhinehart's safe by an effort of the intellect, and had foreordained the encounter with Burgoyne and the equally essential meeting with Gleason. He hugged himself at the thought of having made Burgoyne his witness. Holy was a gentleman; he would tell the truth. And unwilling in this mood to be surpassed by anybody he beheld himself about to play the game in gentlemanly style.

He was certainly unwilling that the loss in this affair should fall on Anna Holden, a young lady whom he had met socially, and with regard to whom he had entertained wild fancies through some days and nights after his first sight of her in the rooms of the association. Her youth and beauty and untamable spirit had excited Pinney till the conviction that she was unattainable had cooled him. An intuitive perception had informed him that she was already in love, probably with her cousin, and the rainbow of a rich marriage had faded from Pinney's dreams.

Yet he was disposed to protect her in the matter of the pearls, and to his inebriated wits this seemed feasible. The pearls would be sold to one or two rascally dealers, before whom Pinney had no intention of appearing in any recognizable form. The dealers would unload on still more rascally collectors, Pinney keeping track of the pearls, and in due time the association would find them, and Jack himself would lay them in the slim, white hands of the lady who was their rightful owner. The dealers and collectors would divide the damage after silent, fierce, amusing quarrels, and Pinney had no fear that they would ever detect himself as the author of their woe. This restitution would be not only the decent thing, but the safest possible conclusion of the case, if rightly managed.

All these thoughts and innumerable others whirled through Pinney's head while he was riding up and then down the Avenue and while he was saying good-by to Holy without signs of haste

—the hardest part of the whole proceeding. For by this time he had begun to be tormented by the one fear which could not be dismissed, the fear of an indiscretion on the part of Gleason.

There would be no real safety until the pearls were in Pinney's own hands; until his brain should assume the absolute direction of every move in the game. Suspicion would inevitably arise and must be quelled, and the sale of the pearls would call for the most delicate artistry. All this was far beyond Gleason's register; Frank was a good fellow and should be fairly treated in the division of the profits, but he must not try to do any independent thinking; he must take orders from a competent intelligence.

Fortunately the rain excused Pinney for running across the sidewalk from the car. He would have liked to fly up into the apartment through the window, but even to run was a relief, and he ran so easily on the level that he was surprised at the irregular and baffling behavior of the stairs. He found himself stumbling and clutching at the numerous banister rails which floated illusive in the air. Three times he fell flat, and he came to the second-story hall on all fours.

Nothing of this sort would do in Gleason's presence. Frank had talked in too high a key that afternoon; he had assumed an attitude of independence, as if he felt his wits to be as good as Pinney's. He would be very likely to display this spirit again if he should suspect that the elder and abler soldier was the worse for drink. Wherefore, Pinney made a mighty effort in the hall, outside the door which opened directly into their living room; he attained and carefully tested his equilibrium, and entered the apartment as straight as anybody ever walked, or so he thought. He closed the door with his back, however, and the force of gravitation, which seldom acts normally after the sixth mint julep, suddenly became a horizontal force and glued his shoulders to the panel.

Gleason confronted him in dress trousers and shirt, a towering and dominant figure, and he looked down on Jack with an arrogant disfavor unprecedented in their relations.

"Stewed," said he. "I thought so."

"Don't fool yourself, my son," said Pinney. "I'm sober enough to run this job. Where are the pearls?"

"Ask of the oysters," responded Gleason, with derision. "Pearls? Was that what you thought you were getting?"

Pinney had been pale enough before, but he went three shades paler. He got away from the door, and stood erect and steady.

"Are you trying to scare me sober?" he said, with ominous quiet in his manner. "Or is this a hold-out?"

Gleason's clear skin flushed in an instant. He took his pipe from between his teeth and let it fall on the floor.

"I'll tell you what kind of a hold-out it is," he said. "I held us both out of jail. You'd put us in; you, the safety player, the man that was going to take no risks. What was our agreement? What did you promise me this afternoon? And within an hour you let me in for a trick turned in the middle of the street with everybody looking."

"Well," said Pinney, "go on. What did you do?"

"I turned that box back. Didn't you find it in the car?"

"We found the box," Pinney replied. "You'd opened it, of course?"

"Not me," said Gleason. "I wouldn't take the risk."

"But you did take it," Pinney said, "and you bungled the job. You put the wrapper on the box the wrong way. I noticed that, and I've got you dead to rights. You threw quite a bluff this

afternoon, Prettiness, but you're not smooth enough to get away with it. Come across with those goods."

Gleason was taken aback, but only for a moment.

"Well," said he, "you're right. I did open the box. I knew there'd be a run-in between you and me, and I wanted to be sure what the fracas was about."

"It's about a small matter," Pinney responded. "Only the Burgoyne pearls."

"What!" The word came out of Gleason's big chest like the roar of a lion.

"You've got a grand voice, Frank," said Pinney, "but it doesn't get over."

Gleason took him by the two shoulders.

"Listen, Jack," he said; "there was nothing in that box except weights—two or three old tools from an automobile kit. Of course I meant to tell you this, after I'd shaken you down a bit for what you'd done. That box was a trick package. Whether it had ever held valuable stuff, or had merely been fixed up to pass off on somebody, I couldn't tell, of course. Sit down, Jack; you'll fall."

Pinney was well sobered by this time; it was not mint julep that made him stagger. Horrible disappointment smote him in the midriff, complicating the troubles already existing in that region. He shivered pitiably, stricken with a chilly nausea, and yet he was a hard man to discourage, a despiser of bodily weaknesses, and in this emergency the captain of his soul, such as it was.

He released himself from Gleason's grip, and leaned on a chair back, looking up at Frank and studying his countenance with ever-increasing despair.

"Weights, you say?" he muttered. "Somebody beat me to it, eh?"

"What makes you think the pearls were ever there?" Gleason asked.

"I know they were," Pinney replied, and gave a brief summary of his inferences.

Gleason seemed to be impressed; he even passed a compliment on Pinney's acumen.

"But I don't understand the weights; they were too heavy," he said. "Between four and five pounds, I should think. That seems ridiculous, as a dummy for pearls."

"They weren't a necklace, you know," Pinney reminded him; "they were a harness. They covered the whole front of Mrs. Harriet Burgoyne, and she was no sylph. She was built like a robin."

"Well, we'd better forget them. They're lost to us."

"Not while I draw breath," said Pinney fiercely. "If you're on the level, Holy's got the beads. He's robbed his little cousin, a mere schoolgirl, innocent, beautiful—think of it, Frank!—and I'll get those pearls away from him or bleed him white."

"I thought Holy inherited two millions," Gleason objected. "Why should he do a thing like this?"

"Because he had to," Jack rejoined promptly. "He's been a high liver, always in debt, and his inheritance has put him in a worse hole than the one he was in before. He can't get a dollar, but his creditors won't believe it. They'll squeal to Oswald G. Saintsbury, the trustee. There's the motive, all right."

"You say Holy'd just come from Seitz's when you met him," said Gleason. "His car was standing still. I'll bet he was laying for you."

"Hardly for me. Possibly for you; more likely for Bill."

A nervous smile played around Gleason's mouth.

"Yes, I see. Bill's an easier mark than you are," he said. "It didn't immediately occur to me."

"Not only that, but he's regular," said Pinney. "Holy knows Bill's time card—probably just missed him. I

think Bill may have been a little early to-day."

"And you are the goat," said Gleason, struggling with that smile; "or you would have been if I hadn't queered Holy's game by turning back the goods. What'll he do with that box full of old iron, now it's on his hands again?"

"He started to pass it off on his cousin," Pinney replied, "and then he didn't have the heart. Let's give the devil his due. That was too low down for Holy—to lift her pearls and get her in wrong with Saintsbury at the same time."

"He'll give the box to Saintsbury, and, when the crash comes, he'll tell about riding around town with you. Can you meet it, Jack?" Gleason displayed for a moment his habitual kindliness, which had been conspicuously absent during most of the interview. "Of course I'll stand by you——"

Pinney laughed.

"You poor simp," he said, "don't you comprehend your situation? If Holy put up this job, he was on the watch and saw me make the pass."

"But he didn't see canny little Frank." Gleason tapped himself on the breast. "He can't prove that I was in that cab. Ike Feinburg was driving me."

Feinburg was an escaped convict who had become the owner of several taxicabs in New York and was doing well. Gleason could have sent him back to California to serve out a life sentence.

"Well," Pinney admitted, "Ike can't squeal on you. But that doesn't let you out of this game, Frank. I hold you to the obligations of partnership, and you want to borrow a conscience that will tell you what they are. Borrow Bill's; for partnership matters it's the best on the market. *We*—understand me—*we* are still after those pearls, and if one of us plays false, he will get shot through his yellow head. That goes, Blondy."

There came a slow knock at the door. It sounded as if the caller had rapped discreetly with a piece of iron.

"Bill!" Gleason whispered, going suddenly pale. "Can he be on?"

Pinney walked softly up to him and touched him with a finger on the breast. "Think while there's time, Frank," he said. "You're going up against Bill Harris in another minute, and he's a solid man. Don't try to throw us both. If you've got the pearls, speak up. You're the man falling off the ladder. Find mercy for your soul before you hit the ground."

Gleason looked him straight in the eyes.

"I'm on the level, Jack," he said. "I've told you the truth."

The whole of Pinney's body went hollow with the loss of his last hope that Gleason had the pearls. It would have been so easy to get them away from him, and for a moment the alternative looked so hard, so cruelly unjust. He steadied himself with a hand on Gleason's arm; controlled his haggard countenance and forced it to assume a smile; then crossed the room nimbly and opened the door. Bill Harris was revealed, in an attitude of infinite patience.

Pinney's artistic nature, even at such a sordid crisis of material loss, could not be blind to the merit of this statue.

"Sorry to fidget you like this, Mr. Harris," he said; "but we were in another room. Pray calm yourself and enter."

Bill advanced slowly, looking down at the point of his umbrella to see whether it was wet enough to drip. He was in evening dress, with a raincoat hanging open on his ample bosom. A modest satisfaction, having its root in conscience, gravely rewarded Harris when he walked the streets so dressed at night, with all that white expanse for every lamp to shine upon. It advertised the openness of his er-

rand and the alteration of his life. It was almost like doing something for Mr. Newcomb, who had put him straight.

Especially he liked to call on his associates with a little matter of business out of hours. The thought of their partnership, the idea of confidence and of mutual effort for the association was an unfading and a solemn joy.

"No hurry on my account," he said. "I got a little business, not very pressin'."

Pinney understood Bill's feeling in such matters, and never failed to encourage the illusion of an interest agreeably shared by all.

"We're always ready for business, Bill," he said briskly. "Sit down and put us wise."

Bill took his accustomed chair, hard, with a straight back.

"You know the Burgoyne pearls," said he. "Where do you figure they are?"

Both of Gleason's elbows slipped from the mantelpiece, against which he had been posing, and he nearly fell into the grate. This made considerable noise, but Bill moved not one eyelash. He was still contemplating the umbrella's point.

"The Burgoyne pearls?" said Pinney. "What's the lay, Bill?"

"State comptroller," said Bill. "I been dining with him. On the association."

"I see." Pinney nodded wisely. "It's the tax."

"Dodgin' it," said Bill. "They claim the pearls was stolen. Rhinehart says so."

"What does the comptroller want you to do?"

"Investigate the robbery. How can I investigate nothin'?"

Gleason got a signal from Pinney to show signs of life, so he asked what story was being told about the robbery. Bill replied that Mrs. Burgoyne put the pearls on her bureau one night and went to bed. Next morning they were gone. No break; it seemed to have been an inside job. The case was given to a private agency—Pat Lannigan. Pat handled it himself, on the quiet.

"Lannigan's been dead two or three months," Pinney said.

"A dead detective don't cost nothin'," Bill remarked. "A live one would come high to stand for that yarn."

"We can't touch this case," Gleason said, with anxiety rather poorly concealed. "I hope you turned it down, Bill."

"The comptroller's a cousin o' Mrs. Newcomb's," Bill responded, with an accent of finality.

Gleason reminded him that Mrs. Clarendon was a friend of the Burgoynes and that Mr. Saintsbury was her legal adviser and trustee. "And you know how *she* stands with Mr. Newcomb," he added. "Take my tip and don't get after any friends of hers. The comptroller's pull can't be as strong as Mrs. Clarendon's."

"And Mr. Newcomb at the front," said Bill, "where I can't reach him."

Pinney suggested that the proper policy would be to string the comptroller along, but be careful not to find the pearls.

"These society matters are very complicated, Bill," he said. "You'd better let me advise you. I'll consider what to do about the pearls and give you my opinion in a few days. Meanwhile, take the comptroller to luncheon tomorrow or next day and fill him up with good groceries, but let it stop there."

The telephone bell rang and Gleason went into the next room to answer it. Bill would have awaited his return in silence, but, observing that Pinney's feet looked impatient, he addressed a few remarks to them.

"The comptroller's had two men watchin' Seitz's," he said. "One of

'em reported while we was at dinner. He thinks the pearls was taken away this afternoon in a pasteboard box. Holy Burgoyne took 'em. About half past five."

Jack Pinney felt the cold hand of fate on the back of his neck, but it did not paralyze his faculty of decision.

"I was waiting for that, Bill," he said. "It fits right in with a little observation of my own. Holy picked me up at Twenty-sixth Street, on his way uptown in his car. He had a candy box, and I think there's one chance in a hundred that the pearls were in it. I'll tell you why I think so in a minute, but there's one point to be covered first. I don't know what he did with the box. Does the comptroller's man know? Did he follow Holy?"

And Pinney gathered his nervous strength to await the fateful answer.

"No," said Bill. "The boob didn't have a taxi ready."

Metaphorically, the electric current was turned off of Pinney, and his body sank back limp into the chair. At this moment Gleason thrust in his pallid countenance from the adjoining room and said:

"It's Mrs. Clarendon. She wants to speak with Bill."

He crossed to Pinney as Bill rose and set himself in motion toward the telephone.

"Well," Pinney whispered over his shoulder, as soon as it was safe. "The murder's out all over the map."

"She didn't say what she wanted," Gleason replied; "but there can't be any doubt. You're up against it."

"No more than you are, son," Pinney rejoined. "We hang together."

Bill's conversation was brief, and he gave no account of it when he returned. He crossed the room as if he were walking on a narrow beam high up in the skeleton of some tall structure, and finally anchored himself near the outer door.

"Go on, Jack," he said, and Pinney gave a mild version of the quest of the ideal mint julep, touching discreetly on the matter of Burgoyne's peculiar dealings with the candy box.

Bill softly drilled into the rug with the point of his umbrella.

"Was the box all right when you left the car, Jack?" he inquired.

"It was for all I know," Pinney replied. "Holy had it on his knee. I'm no X ray, you understand; I couldn't see the inside of it."

Bill addressed the puncture in the rug while trying to fill it up by pushing in the adjacent fabric.

"They can't charge you with doin' nothin' alone," he said. "Where was Frank at this time?"

"We had a date for dinner——" Gleason began.

"Have you had it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Too many mint juleps," Pinney explained. "When I finally persuaded Holy to relax his tentacles and bring me home, I wasn't conscious of my usual hearty appetite, Mr. Harris. I asked Frank to wait a while."

"Had he been out?"

"Yes," said each man hastily, afraid that the other would be foolish enough to say no.

"I went to the restaurant," Gleason added. "Jack wasn't there, so I came home."

Bill drew a long breath, then slowly lifted his head and turned the searchlight of his pale-gray eyes on the two men—on Pinney first, on Gleason for the longer space.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Absolutely all, good old boy," Pinney responded, with such candor and fine sense of loyalty that Gleason, hearing it, was stricken with respectful admiration.

"Absolutely all," said he, striving to be an accurate echo.

In the brief following silence they heard a cab stop before the house.

"Mrs. Clarendon," said Bill. "Comin' for me. She ain't mentioned the pearls, but I guess we can figure that a trick's been turned. But you can gamble that they don't get nothin' on our association. Also that O. G. Saintsbury pays that tax."

He opened the door and closed it after him with his peculiar quiet, less obtrusive than silence.

Pinney collapsed in his chair and was afflicted with shivering. Angered by this weakness, he struck himself on the chest, rose, and went to the window, where he watched Bill get aboard the cab. Gleason had gone to the mantelpiece and was leaning on his elbows with his face in his hands. For three or four minutes there was no exchange of words, then Gleason spoke, without raising his head:

"Where do you think Burgoyne took the box? To Mrs. Clarendon—or how did she get on?"

"I don't know," said Pinney. "Perhaps she's wise to Holy's game, whatever it is, and wants Bill to block it on the quiet. That may give us more time."

"I think the blow-up will come tonight. What shall we do?"

"Bank on Holy's testimony. It's all we've got to draw to, and it's enough. Holy wasn't followed; nobody's onto you and me, Frank. We're safe as a church."

"Safe as the steeple, with the rest of it on fire," Gleason retorted in a spasm of nervousness. "I tell you, Jack, I'm about ready to jump." And he looked it, standing with a strained erectness, pale, the faint color that still showed in his cheeks flickering with the pulsation of his blood. Pinney eyed him with an envious admiration and with contempt achieved only after an effort.

"You're a beauty," he remarked, "but that's all you are."

Some one knocked in a timid, hesitating manner, but the summons caught Gleason in a defenseless moment, his mind empty except for thoughts of personal danger. Impelled by an unreasoning impulse, he ran to the next room, snatched a small, automatic pistol, and pushed it through the sleeve of a sack coat whose other sleeve he strove for as a cat chases its tail. With the coat on at last, and the pistol in a side pocket, he stood between the rooms, looking out around the end of a portière, while Pinney answered the knock. The visitor was Nielson, Holy Burgoyne's chauffeur.

The Swede entered with reluctance, as if some one were pushing him. He was a pleasant-looking, well-mannered fellow in ordinary moments, with a tow head and a delicate skin white as a baby's on his brow, where it had been protected from the sun. His high color showed through the tan on his cheeks.

He politely closed the door for Pinney, and then stood in an attitude of stolid obstinacy superior to despair, clutching his cap with trembling fingers. He seemed especially impressed by Gleason, who had got the better of his alarms and had emerged from the other room with the manner of a prince. Both he and Pinney had scented trouble instantly, and had assumed an air of dignity as a counter on the weak point of the adversary's obvious embarrassment.

"What is your errand, Nielson?" Pinney asked. "I infer that Mr. Burgoyne sent you."

"No, sir," the Swede responded, blushing. "I yust kom for myself." He paused, breathing hard, pumping up energy. "I ban in New York 'most two years," he went on, with a desperate effort. "It's a wonder if I shouldn't learn something. Yes; oh, yes, I know

a good thing when I see it. Do I speak plain enough?"

"A trifle of accent," Pinney responded, seeing that the question revealed a real difficulty which it would be possible to increase. "Naturally a pleasant voice, still clean, not yet offensively soiled by cosmopolitan contacts. I trust that the same may be predicated of your morals, but I am harassed by doubt."

Failing to understand any of this, Nielson was not flattered as to his English, but inspired with distrust, as Pinney had intended. For a few distressing moments the Swede's head was full of Swedish and nothing else. Doggedly he fought his way out from the shadow of Babel which had been cast upon him for his confusion.

"I saw you done it," he said slowly. "Look! Yust like this." Using his cap, he performed a highly illuminating pantomime representing Pinney passing the candy box into the taxicab, and Gleason did not fail to note that he was plainly indicated as the receiver. "I saw it by the glass"—indicating the position of the chauffeur's mirror, which gives a rearward view. "I thought it was a yoke, but now I know it was the pearls. Yes, oh, yes. And I get right on the yob."

His "yes, oh, yes" was a gem too rare to have been a native product of this soil. He must have got it of some blue-eyed, sweet-voiced girl from his own land.

"Pearls?" said Gleason, shaking his head. "What does the fellow mean?"

"I mean you got 'em," Nielson answered, with embarrassment that almost strangled him. "I saw you by the cab when we passed this house. You put old tools in the box, and how you got him back in my car I lak to know."

Nobody enlightened him; nobody said anything. Nielson tried to break down the barrier by being generous with his own information. He told how the box had been opened at Mr. Saintsbury's and that Mr. Burgoyne was still there. Nielson had been "inwited" into the house and questioned. He repeated his chief answer, not without pride in it.

"I said it must have been done in the yeweler store. Oh, I got along good; not so hard as here. Mr. Burgoyne went out by the car with me, and slap me on the back of the shoulder. 'Good boy,' he said. 'I'll take care of you.' Well, I didn't tell him. I yust looked away and thought where I was—in New York. Everybody's doing it. He said, 'I won't let that old scorpion bite you.' Then he told me to call it a day's work, so I put up the car and kom here."

To these confidential disclosures neither Pinney nor Gleason made any response. They had exchanged signals to the effect that it was best to let him talk himself empty. They maintained, therefore, a coolly receptive attitude, as if they were merely waiting for Nielson to express his full meaning. He supposed that he had done so. In an agony of nervousness he looked from one to the other of them vainly, and the sweat poured down his face.

"I ban thinking," he said at last. "You got the pearls, yes, but how for the money? Every pawnshop will know what they are."

Pinney nodded judicially, as if the point were well taken. Again an awful silence fell. Nielson mopped his forehead in the crook of his elbow.

"I bat you sell 'em back to Mr. Burgoyne," was his final effort, and it seemed to be the point which had been especially in his view for some time.

Pinney glanced inquiringly at Gleason, who, after a slight pause, responded with a graceful but entirely meaningless gesture. At this, Nielson had a flash of temper which faded

feebly. He was overwhelmed by a sense of failure, of inadequacy. The thing he had set himself to do was not natural to his blood; it was the result of cosmopolitan contacts—to borrow Pinney's phrase—a purely imitative performance, as when the barber's pet monkey tries to shave the cat.

It seemed that the hazing process had succeeded beyond the original intent, which had been merely to break the man's nerve and effect an arrangement with him on the easiest terms. This would have involved a tacit confession that the pearls had been secured, but Pinney now thought he saw a way to avoid that risk and reduce Nielson's price even lower by bamboozling him as to the nature of the transaction he had seen. Poor Jack was not at his best or he would have read his adversary more deeply.

"You can't do this sort of thing, my young friend," he said; "and there's nothing in it, anyway, because you're wrong about the whole matter. As to the pearls, the truth is that Mr. Saintsbury is trying to hide them——"

"So not to pay the tax," said Nielson. "Yes, sir. I heard about that in the car since quite a while."

"And I suppose you know what our association is? It's like the police, but of a higher grade. We do things that the police can't do, such jobs as tracing these pearls. The State of New York has employed us to find them."

"I bat you find 'em and don't tell you got 'em," Nielson retorted, with unexpected spirit. "Yes, oh, yes. Yust like the police. What you call graft, and pretty big, too. Yes, oh, yes. I ban on to what they're worth."

He fumbled with the sweatband of his cap, and finally pulled out a folded bit of paper which fell from his nervous fingers. Pinney plucked it gracefully from the air before it was halfway to the floor, opened it, and beheld the following arithmetical calculation, worked out after laborious attempts and with several corrections in the final reading:

$$
\begin{array}{r}
800\,)\,4{,}000 \\
\hline
5 \\
\\
5\,)\,700{,}000 \\
\hline
140{,}000 \\
\\
3\,)\,140{,}000 \\
\hline
46{,}666.66
\end{array}
$$

"Ah," said Pinney, with a chill in his marrow, "I see. Very businesslike, I'm sure. But what is this first item?"

Under pressure, Nielson explained that he had heard of an automobile worth four thousand dollars which was stolen and sold for eight hundred—apparently the most successful transaction of the kind that had ever come to his knowledge. "Eight hundred dollars," he remarked, "is five times as less as four thousand." Whence he had concluded that the Burgoyne pearls might sell for "five times as less" as their supposed value, and he had divided seven hundred thousand by five, and had got a hundred and forty thousand as the probable sale price to be shared by three partners—one, two, three; he counted the gentlemen present, with voice and gesture, beginning with himself.

It appeared, therefore, that he had come to demand the modest sum of forty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six dollars not to mention the odd cents.

Pinney rolled an eye toward Gleason, who made a warning sign. It was not safe to shatter so magnificent a dream. Pinney's plan had been to tell Nielson that the association was hunting for the pearls in the legitimate course of its business, and that what he had seen that afternoon was an unsuccessful attempt to get them. If he would preserve silence and assist in the search,

he should share the large reward offered by the State.

With so weak a stomach for crime the fellow might prefer honesty, even at greatly reduced terms, but he was not stupid enough to believe in any reward which could yield him a share worth mentioning in comparison with forty-six thousand dollars. His hopes were too high and too definite; he wouldn't stand the drop, even if it were possible to make him believe that the pearls were not in hand. Probably he would go soft and tell the whole story to Burgoyne through loyalty, perhaps affection. He had "yust looked away" when Burgoyne had patted him on the shoulder.

With this in mind, Pinney didn't dare to say that he hadn't the pearls, didn't dare attempt to hold the man by a promise based on an uncertainty. No admissions could increase the fatal force of the testimony he was already prepared to give. A whisper of that story in the ears of Bill Harris would be enough.

The thing to do was to use Nielson; promise him whatever might be necessary; work him as a source of information, a sort of spy in the other camp. He must already have heard much that was worth knowing through his experience at Saintsbury's house.

Pinney tapped the paper softly with his finger.

"This is all right enough," he said. "Leave it to us. You'll get your third, if you keep quiet and obey orders. Of course you understand that it will take several weeks to sell the pearls."

"Who you sell 'em to?" Nielson asked. He knuckled the sweat out of his mild blue eyes and stared at Pinney. "I bat you won't tell me; yes?"

"You win," responded Pinney. "I won't tell anybody. It wouldn't be fair to the customer."

"Does he live in New York?"

"Yes; I don't mind telling you that. He's right here."

Nielson seemed slightly relieved.

"No use to go away, what you call skip," he said. "Mr. Burgoyne fix you all good with Mr. Saintsbury. I heard him. He said, 'I won't stand for Mr. Pinney to have trouble about this. I saw him all the time; every minute,' he said."

"Very kind of Mr. Burgoyne, I'm sure," said Pinney. "Unfortunately he couldn't say the same of yourself. After all, you had the best chance to get the pearls. You were alone with them in that car several times." The exact number was dissolved in mint julep, but Pinney was sure of the essential fact.

"Mr. Saintsbury don't know that," said Nielson. "Mr. Burgoyne put up a yob with me, outside, before he take me in. 'Say I don't leave the box in the car,' he told me. 'Say I carry it in every time where I go.' Pretty good for me, I guess. I ban in some hole."

Here was something new and important. Nielson's former mention of the matter had not included any hint that Burgoyne had gone to the length of inventing a story for him and backing it with his own false testimony. It meant that Burgoyne was determined to save the two men who had been in the car with him.

Gleason perceived this, and was naturally curious to know what theory Burgoyne intended to advocate.

"Did Mr. Burgoyne say he thought the pearls were stolen at Seitz's?" he asked.

"No, sir," Nielson replied. "He says he looked in the box, down there, and they were all right."

"Who else looked in? Mr. Rhinehart, I suppose?"

Nielson shook his head.

"No, sir," said he. "Nobody. Mr. Burgoyne took the box in a room alone

and opened it and tied it up again, and yust walked right out to the car."

"Where did you go before you took me aboard?" Pinney asked. "What did Mr. Burgoyne say about that to Mr. Saintsbury?"

Nielson answered that they had gone straight to Twenty-sixth Street, not stopping till they were halted there by the traffic policeman. No one had spoken to Mr. Burgoyne or come up to the side of the car. That was the story told to Mr. Saintsbury, and it was the truth.

Deep fires burned in Jack Pinney's eyes as he listened to this recital, so accurately supporting his own convictions and desires. He flashed a lightning glance to Gleason, who looked bewildered. It was plain enough, of course, that Burgoyne was deliberately acquitting everybody except himself—which would be the natural behavior of a gentleman who had stolen seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls—but while Pinney accepted the inference without a moment's doubt, Gleason seemed unable to accept it at all.

"What did Mr. Saintsbury say to this?" he asked; but Nielson could not remember anything except questions. It was fairly clear that the lawyer had not expressed any strong opinion in Nielson's presence.

Pinney had got the information he was after, and he now read the Swede a brief and thrilling lecture on the dangers and the profits of his situation, even going through the rigmarole of setting all three names to the paper which bore the calculation of shares and swearing an oath over it. Nielson was so scared that his legs visibly trembled and he couldn't take his eyes off the breast of Pinney's coat after the fatal document had been pocketed therein.

"Now, my boy," said Pinney, "I guess that will be all for this evening. We will take care of you all right, but for the present you'd better not come to see us. It's too dangerous."

Nielson drew a deep, tremulous breath, and spread apart his feet as if to brace himself. He held his cap in his two hands, and it could be heard ripping with the tension.

"I want some money," he said. "Two thousand dollars, and I got to have him by Friday in the afternoon."

This sudden assault seemed to catch Pinney in the pit of the stomach. He had difficulty in finding breath to answer.

"Two thousand?" he said. "What do you mean? This is Wednesday, man; we can't sell the pearls before Friday. You must wait."

"I can't," said Nielson. "I got to have it."

"In Heaven's name, what for?"

"I want to get married," said the Swede. "My girl go back home to Sweden Saturday, but not if I get that money. So I've got to have it. Only for that I wouldn't have done this. You bat, no; I—would—*not!*"

"But it won't take two thousand——"

"Yes, sir; it will. She said so."

And he stuck to it. Nothing could move him. His girl had said she would marry him if he had two thousand dollars; but of course it would take him years to save as much as that, and she was going back to Sweden Saturday. Once there, she would marry somebody else.

Pinney argued in vain. He even offered to intercede with the lady, but Nielson wouldn't furnish him with the necessary particulars, declining to say further than that she was a manicure who had worked in a barber's shop. As indicating a sophisticated and mercenary young woman this was disheartening, and tended to support Nielson's story of his unhappy love now brightened by a sudden lurid flare of hope.

"I bat I get the money from Mr.

Burgoyne, if I know how," said Nielson, and that settled it. A pistol under Pinney's nose would have been no more persuasive.

"All right, my son," said Pinney, with the best grace he could command, "if it's a love affair, I guess we can't disappoint you. I'll see that you get the money."

New streams of sweat suddenly broke out on Nielson's face. Drops ran down the sides of his nose, so that he seemed to be weeping, but gradually a smile dawned over the broad, wet landscape of his countenance.

"Well," he said, "it's good I'm here, anyhow. Yes, sir. Twenty times I kom up to that door below outside and don't got the nerve to go in."

He was too nervous to manage his own exit, but Pinney did it for him. The door was shut, and for the second time that evening poor Jack leaned against it, too weak to get away. Gleason, tall and menacing, glared upon him from his place by the mantelpiece.

"Where do we get two thousand dollars by Friday?" he demanded. "Where do *you* get it, I ought to say? You let us in for this."

"You poor doll," Pinney rejoined, "do you think I'm ashamed of it? Why, Frank, we've got the pearls cinched. Holy's got 'em, and do you think I can't take 'em away from him? Then you don't know me. Cheer up, Brainless; I'll hang those pearls around your alabaster throat within three days. As for that Swede, he had to be paid, and, on the whole, it's better he should get his bit in cash. He'll never get any more, of course, and the two thousand will hold him safe as long as we need him. *I* don't wish him any hard luck. His matrimonial prospects are enough in that line, and may the Lord have mercy on his soul."

"How do we get the money?" Gleason repeated.

"Oh, well," said Pinney, "we'll have to tap the association's funds, after all. I'll think out a scheme right now if you'll keep quiet."

And he began to pace the floor—the same man who had come to that room such a little while ago in the glory of a dazzling success, eager to undertake the division of a loot worth three-quarters of a million, and now fallen to planning the unprofitable theft of a pitiful two thousands with which to buy a brief immunity from the consequences of a sickening failure.

Pinney did not know why it was now so hard for him to devise a plan for "getting by Bill Harris," but, in fact, about a half of his mind was occupied in holding a pose, in asserting that he was just as clever as he had thought himself to be, and that he had not yet lost his grip on the Burgoyne pearls. In these unfavorable conditions no practicable scheme for diverting the association's funds suggested itself. Even those which he had previously framed by way of mental exercise now violated natural probability like remembered dreams. And, meanwhile, Gleason's eyes followed him with too much comprehension in their glance. Pinney resented it from an intellectual inferior.

"Don't stand there posing for your photograph," he said irritably. "This is easy enough. Let's go and get some dinner."

"All right, old boy," said Gleason amiably. "It'll do you good. And, I say, don't take this thing so hard. Perhaps *I* can think it out."

Pinney stared at him, vaguely disquieted.

"You," he muttered. "Ha! I wonder if you're the Masked Marvel of Mentality."

TO BE CONTINUED.

*The second part of this novel will appear in the August 20th POPULAR.*

# The Dreamer

By Foxhall Williams

*Author of "Behind the Screen," "The Varsity Letter," Etc.*

**It is a high honor to find a place in the eight-oared shell of the college that has the largest student body in the world. It comes to the man in this story. He had dreamed of other things, but on the day of the race he was well content**

THE elements that go to make up tragedies are sometimes comic in themselves. And often they are not visible, even to fairly discerning eyes. Ludicrous little dramas, as truly tragic as any that Shakespeare ever wove, are being acted out constantly before audiences that never see them; their stage may be the flat above, the farmhouse at the bend of the road, a corner of a city street—any one of a million unlikely places. And if the actors are not tragedians, so much the worse for their chance of winning sympathy!

Few people would have failed to laugh at the association of Tommy Harden and tragedy in any form. Tommy himself would have seen to that, for that matter. He kept his tragedy to himself; he wanted no one's sympathy, partly because he had not the least idea that he was in any sense a sympathetic figure. And yet Tommy, taking it all in all, had received a pretty poor lot of cards when fate dealt him the hand with which he had to play his life.

This hadn't been apparent in the beginning. He was a normal sort of baby, and, except for a slight delicacy, a tendency toward colds, and a general lack of vigor, his boyhood had been normal, too. They wouldn't let him play about very much; rough games were held to be too strenuous for him. But games of that sort are simply an outlet for superabundant vigor and animal spirits, and Tommy, having neither, felt no craving to join the other boys of his age in the customary sports. He had a wholly adequate substitute for that sort of thing; he used to read and dream.

And his dreams, for years, were of the things he would do when he went to college. By that time, he had decided, he would have filled out and grown tall. He wasn't sure about the details; he didn't know whether he would be a famous football player or a star baseball man. Perhaps he would be both. But he would be one or the other—unless, at the last moment, it seemed likely that he could do more for the college by going out for the track team. As time went on he leaned more and more toward this last idea, because, after all, he didn't grow much bigger, and size mattered less in track than in the other sports.

He read a good deal. His mother meant well enough by him, but she didn't know much about boys, and his father, who might have done something to foster his dream by driving him out of doors, was dead. So his eyes began to show the strain, and nature, which might have done something for his body, was deprived of the all important

aid of air and exercise in the requisite measure.

Tommy clung tenaciously to his dream. He took a particular delight in books and stories that dealt with weaklings who suddenly developed extraordinary strength and skill, and the vagueness with which the authors treated the details of their transformations escaped him. Tommy wasn't a very critical reader, and, moreover, he had the thoroughly human trait of being willing to be deceived when to be undeceived meant the loss of something cherished. So, as long as he could, Tommy indulged himself in the vision of himself as a famous runner or jumper.

He got a lot of pleasure, too, out of trying to make up his mind as to the college that should add the points he won to its total in the intercollegiate games. There was no particular collegiate tradition in his family; his choice was untrammeled. He thought of Harvard, Yale, Princeton—any one of the three would do, he thought. In fact, for two or three years, he blew hot and cold to them, according to which had the best teams.

And then, of course, he woke up. The hard, crass touch of reality shattered his dream. It was time for him to go to college. And, instead of the free choice he had supposed that he would have, he had no choice at all. Through his school he could get a Columbia scholarship; there was no money to pay his way through Yale or Princeton or Harvard. If he went to Columbia he could live at home, and thus reduce expenses to the necessary minimum. His choice, then, lay between going to Columbia, in the city of New York, and going to work.

That in itself he might have borne well enough. But it was only the first blow. He was awakened by that, and he saw himself, at last, as he was and must be. He saw a stunted, white-cheeked boy, with a high forehead and weak, rather protruding eyes, which blinked when he did not wear his glasses; with spindle shanks for legs and pipestems for arms; with a difference of half an inch, no more, between his chest when it was normal and when it was expanded; with no wind, no stamina. And that was the end of his dream!

So he told himself, and fought out his battle alone. It seemed to him that to go to college now, to face the real thing that was so different from his dream, was more than he could bear. But there was good stuff enough in his puny frame, and, now that he was awake, he saw things clearly. He had no right to refuse his chance. His dream was over, and he couldn't win it back. But his life had to be lived, just the same, and he understood, now, something of the sacrifice his mother had made to give him even this chance, so poor and drab when it was compared with the career he had dreamed about.

And after he had matriculated and adopted the freshman's white-buttoned cap, he began to see that the eternal law of compensation was working in his favor. He had given up his romances of sport; it was when he applied Emerson's essay on compensation to his own case that he had his first gleam of comfort. He began to understand that he was better off at Columbia than at any college he could have chosen. For there his deficiencies were not contrasted so sharply with the attributes he lacked. There were many students of his own sort—with this difference, that they had not dreamed his dream.

Sport was not in the foreground at Columbia in those days. Football was still under the ban; he was not reminded, as he would have been at any other college, of that stage of his dream in which it had been his destiny to run the length of the field, in the last minute of play, for the touchdown that

converted defeat into victory. It was true that, in the chilly days of early fall, barelegged runners swung around the South Field track. But he had little occasion to go in that direction; he could stay, for the most part, on the campus, with the bulk of the great library shutting off his view of the luckier ones whose dreams might still come true.

In every way he found cause for gratitude. His mother's flat was not far from the campus; he reached his classrooms in the morning after a short walk, went home for lunch, and returned in the afternoon. In his whole freshman year he never saw the inside of the dormitories at the end of South Field. Only in the gymnasium, when he struggled through the calisthenic drill that was prescribed, did he come in contact with the athletic phase of university life, and that contact was of the slightest.

He was as little in touch with the sort of college life that had filled his dreams as a man could be and still be a college man at all. Had he gone away from home and lived in a dormitory, everything would have been different. He would have been reminded of his dream at every turn; he would have had to suffer his disappointment anew every day. But here, at Columbia, he could drift insensibly into a class that caught a great part of the student body, and live, for the most part, a life only indirectly affected by the college.

But, if he was content, he wasn't happy. The memory of his dream was a sufficient inhibition of happiness. The mental habit that his dreaming had planted in him couldn't die all at once. In spite of himself he began to develop a fierce, intense sort of college spirit. Gradually he transferred to Columbia all his loyalty to the unselected Alma Mater of his dream. He snatched furtive glimpses of the men on the rowing machines, just before the ice in the Hudson broke up; he lingered in the gym to watch the battery men of the baseball nine practicing. And when April came he found himself, drawn by some force that was irresistible, turning away from home when he was free from lecture periods and going to South Field, to peer through the fence at the busy scene within.

They would be playing all sorts of games inside, on those spring days. South Field was a sort of oasis of youth and exuberance in the heart of the city. Half a block away was the subway and one trolley line; in the other direction lay Amsterdam Avenue and another trolley line. Across One Hundred and Sixteenth Street flowed the traffic of the town—taxicabs, delivery wagons, trucks. Irreverent small boys peeped through the fence, worshiping the baseball candidates, jeering at the devotees of tennis, puzzled by the antics of the exponents of lacrosse. Track and field men, soccer football players, made up the list.

And of all these things there was not one that Tommy could do. He knew that now. And still he began to dream again. He dreamed of doing something for Columbia, as he had once dreamed, although he had not known that, of doing something for himself. But, though he dreamed, something had gone out of his dream. It was illusion, the very stuff that dreams are made of. For now, even while he dreamed, he was tragically awake to the truth, and he knew that his dream could never come true. Some may be able to smile at Tommy Harden, but to others he may seem, perhaps, to be a grotesquely tragic figure. I don't know; that is for each one who reads to decide for himself.

Somehow, Tommy got through his freshman year. He had established for himself a curious sort of relation with his college. He was introspective, of course; it followed that he was reticent.

He had never had many friends; in college he made none. No one suspected the truth about his dream; he would have died for shame had he thought that any one might ever know. His very peeps at the life of games and sports were furtive, shamefaced. And no one knew that he was going, after college closed, to the great boat race at Poughkeepsie. He earned a little money in odd ways, and it was some of this, that he had intended to apply to the purchase of some books, that he used for the trip. Purposely he failed to get a seat in the Columbia section of the observation train; he saw the Columbia crew, rowed out, beaten in the last few lengths, from a car that was crowded with indifferent spectators, bound by no college ties at all, who were, in the main, for Cornell because Cornell was usually the victor.

That race at Poughkeepsie did something for Tommy, though. After that his enthusiasm was concentrated upon the crew. More than any other Columbia team, it seemed to him, the crew typified the spirit of his old dream. It was more remote from the city; there was about it more of the breath of the open. Quite after his old fashion he made a hero of the coach, the quiet, strong man who fought on, year after year, handicapped by the indifference of the college, by the ludicrously meager turnout of candidates, and kept Columbia, in spite of everything, up near the head of the river.

And in the fall Tommy took to slipping away, as early as he could, and crossing the Fort Lee ferry to Edgewater, where the crew's barge was moored. There, under the Palisades, in the quiet reaches of the Hudson's west bank, the crew practiced every day. And, as often as he could, Tommy was there, hanging about the bank, watching the work with hungry, eager eyes, and dreaming of what might have been had he had the frame of any one of the men who sat, splendid in their strength, in the slender shell.

He was almost furtive, at first, but he grew bolder as time went on, and drew nearer to the barge. Two or three oarsmen who were in his classes nodded to him, and once, when one of these approached with the coach, Tommy was amazed to see the great man turn and look at him.

"Is that a Columbia man?" the coach asked.

The oarsman laughed and nodded and said something Tommy could not hear. But he could guess what it was; he flushed scarlet. But there was no resentment in him; it seemed to him only natural that the coach should exclaim in wonder at the idea of his being a college man at all. And it was that same day that the miracle occurred. For, when the crews had come in, and the shadows were lengthening in the crimson glow that the sun left upon the river, Tommy, lingering, reluctant to go, saw the coach, Jim Price, coming toward him. And in a moment he understood that the coach was speaking to him.

"Oh, Harden!" said Price. "Stand up and let's have a look at you! What do you weigh?"

"A hundred and eight," said Tommy, blushing.

"Good enough!" said Price. "Why don't you come out for coxswain?"

Incredulous, dazed, Tommy stood and blinked through his thick glasses.

"Well?" said Price, with a touch of impatience. Autocrats are used to quick answers—and Price knew nothing of Tommy's dream.

"Do you mean—me?" asked Tommy, in a hoarse whisper.

"Sure—why not? Eyes aren't so bad that you can't see to steer, are they? Stand all right in your studies? Never mind about not knowing how—you can learn all right if you've got any sense at all!"

"I—I—never dreamed I could be of any use——" said Tommy still faintly.

Price's eyes shone. He was a student of character in his way; he had to be. And he liked the way Tommy put it. In that moment, perhaps, he was closer to understanding Tommy Harden than any one had ever been.

"All right," he said. "Get over here as early as you can to-morrow. Bring me your schedule, and if you've got late recitations I'll see what I can do about having them shifted. You'll get your outfit here. That's all."

And the next afternoon Tommy found that it was true; that he had not just been dreaming again. Price nodded to him when he appeared at the barge that served as boathouse. Greene, the assistant manager, seemed to know about him.

"Come on, Harden," he said, "and I'll see if I can fit you out. If you stick on the squad I'll order some stuff for you, of course."

And a few minutes later Tommy, his bare legs shivering in the crisp October wind, stood on the float, an incongruous little figure in his trunks and rowing shirt. Price came over to him.

"I'll show you how to handle the ropes in a little while," he said. "Look here, Harden—I'm going to be frank with you. I believe you've got a mighty valuable thing—common sense. True, you don't know anything about rowing—well, I'd rather work in virgin soil. I can teach you—and I'm going to find out whether I can trust you to obey orders. If you make good you can sit in that shell at Poughkeepsie, and you can win your 'C'—and know you've earned it ten times over if we win the race!"

Tommy's head was swimming. He looked dumbly at Price.

"Oh!" said the coach. "There's one thing. You can swim, can't you? Every man on the squad has to know how to swim."

Tommy's heart sank within him. He might have known that there would be a fly in the ointment! He could not swim. But not for anything the world could offer would he have confessed it in that moment. Without really knowing what he did, he nodded.

"All right—overboard with you and let's see!"

For a moment Tommy hesitated. And then he shut his eyes and jumped—into deep water for the first time in his life! He didn't care; it seemed to him that he might as well be drowned as confess to the lie. The cold water gripped him; it got in his nose and eyes and mouth. He struggled wildly; then felt himself sinking. And the next moment some one caught him, and he was conscious of Price's angry voice in his ears and sat up, dripping, on the float.

"You —— little fool!" roared Price. "What did you say you could swim for? And why did you go in when you knew you couldn't?"

"I—I—was afraid I wouldn't get my chance—I thought I'd manage somehow——" Tommy gasped.

"Take him in and bake him out, Greene!" Price ordered. His voice was gruff; a few minutes later, he followed Tommy into the barge's interior and told him, in distilled language, precisely how many sorts of fool he had shown himself to be.

"But—I guess we can teach you to swim," he said, in the end. "If you're keen enough to do a thing like that——"

And so Tommy's dream began to come true. But, after the manner of dreams, it was transformed by reality. For there was no glamour about the work he had to do. Price looked to his body and his mind alike. All winter long there were setting-up exercises for him, not so much to develop his body, which, in a coxswain, did not greatly matter, as to tone up his nerves. And every day, no matter what the weather, he had a measured distance to walk.

His eyes grew better; the unhealthy pallor of his cheeks disappeared.

And always, too, he studied rowing and racing. He drank in long drafts of Price's wisdom in the matter of tides and currents. He studied diagrams that Price drew for him of eddies and whirling formations in water, which, to the trained eye of a real coxswain, spying them ahead of his shell's bow, are a warning to diverge ever so slightly from the straight course. He learned the theory of how to guide a boat so that it rides easily over the swells sent out by a steamer passing half a mile away.

At Price's elbow, when the work on the machines began, he learned the Price stroke, and the infinite variations of it that oarsmen, often subconsciously, seek to introduce.

"You think they've got it down, and then they get off in a boat by themselves and it's all gone," said Price. "That's where the cox comes in, my son! Once the boat's off in the race you take my place. You've got to watch every man in your boat every second. You've got to see why the puddling isn't right. You've got to know just why Number Four is rushing his slide—and tell him quick! You've got to do a million things."

All that can be taught by word of mouth and on dry land Tommy knew of rowing when the first warm days that are the harbingers of spring appeared. Now he, too, shared the eagerness of the oarsmen for the time when the ice would be out of the river and they could be out and at their real work. The time came at last. Glorious days, late in March and early in April, with a hot sun shining down and green things beginning to peep through the earth. Days such as Tommy Harden, in his most glowing dreams, had never dreamed of. Days in which he sat, the tiller ropes in his hand, and felt the shell leap into life beneath him. Minutes in which Price, standing in the bow of the coaching launch, was silent, while he, Tommy Harden, barked orders through his tiny megaphone to the eight laboring men before him in the shell.

Now he applied all the lessons that Price had taught him through the winter. He had days of discouragement, when it seemed to him that he would never learn, but gradually he found himself slipping into a routine that made him laugh at his fears. He had started in the second shell, but before long he was transferred to the varsity, and stayed there, day after day, week after week.

All the time he was learning. Now that he understood the mechanics of the work, Price began to train him in the task of carrying the crew through a four-mile race.

"We lost last year," he said, again and again, "because we went out too soon. I told them, over and over, that it was Cornell we had to beat. And in the first mile we chased Wisconsin. In the second it was Pennsylvania. Then, until we were under the bridge, we were fighting it out with Syracuse. We left them behind in the last half mile—and then Cornell slipped up and won the race! This year—there'll be a chart, and it's for the coxswain to make the stroke set the pace at every stage of the race that is down in that chart."

Ten days before the first of the spring's two-mile races, the contest at Princeton, Tommy was taken from his seat.

"I'm saving you for the real race," said Price. "A two-mile race takes no judgment—Lane can handle them at Princeton. And I don't want you spoiled by it."

Tommy understood, and at Princeton he was by Price throughout the race, thrilling at the spectacle, drinking in Price's comments. Columbia was beaten, but Price felt none of the gloom that enveloped Tommy and the others

of the crew. He seemed pleased, rather than worried. He had no reproaches for the crew; he simply took up the training for Poughkeepsie where he had stopped it, ten days before, to apply a little quick-and-early polish for the minor race.

Tommy had gained a little weight. There was a glow in his cheeks now, and he didn't shiver when a cold wind played on his bare legs. All winter long he had swum daily in the pool; he was among the first to brave the waters of the Hudson, going in long before the hardiest swimmers began to haunt the beaches around the city. He no longer knew what it was to be nervous, or to lie awake for hours after he had gone to bed, thinking and dreaming. He slept now as soon as his head touched his pillow, and his sleep was long and dreamless. He had no need of dreams, now, to fill his days and nights.

Yet there were times when it seemed that it could not be true. It took every sign that he could see to convince him. Price's constant attention, the friendly manner of the oarsmen, their quick response to his orders; all had a part in transforming him. For there was no doubt. His was the voice of authority as he sat, leaning forward, his eyes on the swaying bodies, the flashing, blue-tipped oars. There were days when he longed for the coming of the moment when the shell would be ready to slip out into the stream, that he might hear his own voice giving the crisp orders.

Then came the trip to Poughkeepsie. They saw the shells and the coaching launch start; next day the squad followed, traveling luxuriously, to the river town. On that first night in quarters Tommy couldn't sleep. He lay awake, listening to the long, melancholy whistles of passing tugs, glimpsing the glare of a searchlight from a river steamer. And in the morning, as soon as it was light, he slipped out and away for a long swim.

But he dropped quickly with the rest into the routine of the quarters, that was not so different, after all, from what had gone before. There were long rows at first, morning and afternoon. Sometimes a dozen crews would be out together, swinging lazily down the river to Milton and coming back in the cool of the early evening. There were hours of utter relaxation, when, in the heat of the noon sun, they lay about the float, basking in the warmth. Sometimes Price loosened the bonds of discipline, and there were nights of wild dissipation in Poughkeepsie, when the launch took them down the river and they stayed at the movies until nine o'clock.

With Price to guide him, Tommy studied all the racing strokes that were on view on the river. He exclaimed at his first sight of a Cornell spurt, admiring the polish that Charles Courtney had given a green crew. He was appalled by the savage Syracuse stroke, and surprised to discover that Price had a great respect for the men from the city of salt.

"Oh, it's not pretty, and I want none of it for my crews!" said Price. "But every so often Ten Eyck turns out a crew that can't be beaten. He's got to have exceptional material, but when he gets a bunch of men that can keep up that stroke of his for four miles it's his race!"

Then there was Pennsylvania, trying an English stroke, trained by an English coach, and Wisconsin, no longer radical, but content to follow the time-tried methods of Courtney and Price. And, after a time, there was a crew from California, made up of giants, at the first sight of whom Price nearly wept.

"I'd take that lot and sweep the river with them!" he said. "But look at them, Tommy—and tell me what's wrong!"

Tommy could tell him precisely. And his knowledge was the measure of the

change that had been wrought in him between October and June.

Then came the time trials, when Price, at hours when the tidal conditions were as nearly as possible like those that would prevail on the day of the race, sent the crew over the course. And these were ordeals no less for Tommy than for the rest of the crew. Price was not anxious to know how fast the crew might be; he wanted it to row the four miles within five seconds of a stated time—the time that, he had decided, would be good enough to win the race.

"I know what these others can do," he said. "It's Cornell we've got to watch again. Syracuse won't last; the others don't count this year."

And when the day of the race came at last Tommy knew just what it was he had to do. He had to hold down his crew; to keep Ladew, the stroke, from yielding to panic and shooting up his stroke too soon.

"You'll be behind when you go under the bridge, and I want you to be behind then," said Price. "I want the crew to come up to the bridge with its reserve strength untouched. Watch Cornell—and don't let them get open water on you before the bridge. Keep them from doing that, if they try to go away. Otherwise, don't let Ladew go above thirty-six. And if you have to spurt to hold Cornell, make him drop his stroke as soon as Cornell quits. Once you're under the bridge—let go!"

The morning of the race came, hot and clear. A waif of a breeze blew across the course; wind and water were ideal and equally fair to all the crews. Columbia had the western course; then came Syracuse, Pennsylvania, Cornell, California, and, on the outside, Wisconsin.

Price was on guard all morning, keeping enthusiastic Columbians from the crew, working to calm the men in the varsity boat. He invented tasks for them, did all he could to keep them busy and get their minds off the race. But the hours dragged on slowly. On the West Shore tracks special trains streamed by, their windows a mass of color. Then came the call for the four and the freshmen; they went away, the four to the starting point of the four-mile course, the freshmen, paddling easily, to their own station at the two-mile mark.

The observation train steamed up to the starting point, already full, with a wild cheer splitting the air as the Columbia section passed the quarters. And then, before he could realize that it was time, Tommy heard a great roar from the train, and, looking up the river, saw the four-oared crews coming down. He laughed with the rest as he saw what had happened; it was a procession, with Cornell six lengths ahead in the first half mile, and drawing farther away at every stroke. But the freshmen wiped out whatever sting lay in that defeat; they won their race in a glorious, driving finish with Cornell and Syracuse, and Price came back with shining eyes.

"All right!" he said. "Come on, boys!"

The men leaped for the shell; in a moment it was in the water, and Tommy, wondering if the others could see how he was shaking, got into his seat. Once more the long train passed; then the Cornell varsity went up the river in its launch, the shell in tow. Pennsylvania paddled up. And then he saw that every lace was tied, and, waiting until Price gave the word, got the shell away from the float. Easily they paddled to the starting point and backed up to their own stake boat.

From behind came the referee's voice:

"Ready—Columbia? Syracuse?"

A hand shot up in answer from each shell.

Then a pistol spoke, and the shell

leaped away under him. At once he began to scream through his megaphone. He wanted to leap overboard for very shame as he saw how bow was splashing, but in a moment all was well, and the shell was gliding smoothly forward. He looked to his left and saw that California, rowing a furious forty, was off in the lead, with Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, rowing raggedly, close behind. After the first half minute Ladew dropped down to thirty-six. Syracuse, with a slightly lower beat, was getting more power, and was a fraction of a length ahead. But Cornell, he saw, was back a little. And when he found his shell was gaining he called sharply to Ladew.

"Drop it, Ladew!" he said. "Thirty-four's enough! Come down—come down!"

Ladew obeyed. His face was grim and set, but he was rowing beautifully, setting a clean, sweet stroke. And behind him the rest of the crew worked like one man. Harden's pulses were throbbing as he watched. But he had no time to think of the beauty of the sight. He had to watch every man in the boat; he had to look sharply ahead to be sure of seeing any obstruction; he had to know, every second, where the other crews were. And he was on edge, waiting for Syracuse to cut loose, knowing that any moment he might see the shell in the next lane shoot away—and knowing, too, that the crew could see that, too.

But for two miles the three crews that every expert favored hung together and let the three that were rank outsiders in all the pools make the pace. Despite himself Harden grew nervous as he saw California hold its lead, even increase it. But he fought down the impulse that rose in him, urging him to send his own shell out after the leader, and just after he had seen the two-mile mark flash past him on the shore he had his reward. Syracuse shot away suddenly, and he saw the leading crews come back. The chalienge had been too much for them; they had given all they had. And now, swiftly, they seemed to come back. The Syracuse lane was empty; the Orange crew had put open water between its stern and Columbia's nose.

Then Cornell raised its beat; instantly Harden loosened his rein.

"All right—shoot her up a bit," he said to Ladew. "Cornell is going away. We want to hold them.

"Good night, California!" he shouted, a moment later, as they passed the beaten crew from the coast, still fighting on doggedly, but hopelessly out of the race now. Wisconsin and Penn slipped back; they were gaining on Syracuse. Harden looked anxiously toward the Cornell boat. It was holding the spurt longer than he had expected. He saw that Syracuse was content; with a quarter of a mile still left of the third mile, the three crews were nearly on even terms. Then Cornell slowed down.

"Drop her!" cried Harden. "All right, Ladew! Cornell's dropped!"

But Syracuse went away as Ladew dropped his stroke; he looked over and saw what was happening.

"Oh, forget Cornell!" he said. "It's Syracuse we've got to beat. I'm going after them."

"No!" cried Harden. And, as he saw the grim lines about the stroke's mouth, his voice rose to a wail: "Ladew—are you crazy? You know the orders—keep it down——"

"Look!" grunted Ladew.

Cornell was three-fourths of a length back; they were gaining on Syracuse. Could Ladew be right? Harden struggled for a moment. And then he made his decision.

"Drop your stroke, Ladew!" he cried. His voice was unnaturally high; it was grotesquely distorted by his megaphone. "Drop it—or I'll steer off the course!"

Ladew's mouth was twisted. He only grinned for answer—and kept to the high beat. And then Tommy Harden made good his threat. Ever so slightly he threw the shell off its course; Ladew screamed at him.

"I'd rather lose that way!" said Tommy, his face white.

"All right!" snarled Ladew.

He dropped his stroke. Cornell came up a trifle; Syracuse drew away. And Tommy, gasping, looked up and saw that the targets on the high bridge seemed as far away as ever. He had lived through five minutes in not more than twice as many seconds.

And then at last the shell passed into the shadow of the bridge and came out beyond it into the lane of yachts and excursion steamers. Foghorns and sirens roared and wailed, but Tommy's voice rose above the din.

"Go to it!" he cried.

And now Columbia began to row. Swaying in time with the straining, naked bodies before him, Harden gasped out encouragement, wild appeals. He gave the crew the stimulus it needed when half a mile remained with his shout as Syracuse suddenly gave out; a moment later, the Syracuse shell seemed to slip backward, out of the race—out of their lives, indeed. Now only Cornell was left. And in that Cornell shell Harden, looking constantly toward it, missed the sense of desperate effort that the men before him gave so plainly. It seemed to him that Cornell, with a tiny lead, was rowing more easily; that it must have still something in reserve that his own crew did not have.

Then he saw Cornell drawing away. The tears came hot, and he screamed at Ladew. And, unbelievably, Ladew grinned at him.

"All right, young un," he said. "We'd be out of it now but for you!"

Now the added drive seemed to shake the shell. Tommy tried to lift himself from his seat; he felt the boat springing forward, like a living thing. They were surging along to the finish, and he saw, ten seconds before he could believe it, that they were gaining. Then, all at once, it was over. Ladew put forth a final effort; to Tommy's dazed eyes it seemed that for a moment Cornell stood still. And then he was looking dully over, as the last stroke was rowed, with Cornell's Number Four opposite him.

He heard his own voice, hoarse and utterly transformed.

"Way enough!" he cried. And then he slumped a little, and the shell yawed, as he dropped one hand and began to splash old Ladew—the man he had been ready to kill five minutes before. "We've won!" he cried.

## THE EXTENT OF SPORTS

IT requires figures to show that this country is strong for outdoor sports. According to the best estimates obtainable there are more than two million motor cars and more than eight hundred thousand motor boats in operation in the United States. This means that the American people pay more than a billion dollars for their motoring.

The paid admissions to baseball and football games in 1915 reached a total of more than fourteen million. Over one thousand golf clubs are listed in reference books, and the number of private and public tennis courts run into far more than a hundred thousand.

# The Pink Sealer

By Hamish McLaurin

*Author of "A Roaring Finish," Etc.*

**It sounds like a story of wine agents, but it isn't. It's a story of canned music. When you sing for the Pink Seal phonograph records—the kind that set you back three dollars a disk—you are a "Pink Sealer" in the profession**

SAM STONE, manager of Porter's Vaudeville Palace, leaned over the first-floor balustrade of Mrs. Prewitt's select boarding house and in tones of razor-edged, ominous politeness, requested an immediate interview with Mrs. Prewitt herself. He was wearing his bath robe and an expression of extreme vexation, which of late had become his usual ten-o'clock-in-the-morning costume.

From the blurred appearance of Mr. Stone's eyes and the oddly independent angles at which his hair projected, an observer would have said that sleep had wooed him most tardily and had departed from him at the coming of the lark. Such observation would have been correct, except that Mr. Stone had greeted the lark on his way to bed in this instance, thus providing that estimable bird with an impregnable alibi had it been under suspicion in the strained situation which had now arisen.

No, it was not the lark that was responsible for Mr. Stone's appearance in the hall; it was Miss Norda Fitzgerald and the parlor piano.

Mrs. Prewitt hastened to grant Mr. Stone's request, for Mr. Stone was her "first-floor front," and had occupied that enviable location ever since she took the house. As she rounded the newel post, however, and approached Mr. Stone's door, she carefully held her facial muscles in readiness to leap into whatever combination seemed necessary to produce the expression best suited to the business on hand. She never could tell by the manager's voice and countenance whether he was about to pay the rent or demand a new carpet, thereby calling for a look of renewed gratitude in the one case or stern, incredulous amazement in the other, and she faced him now with, as usual, a marked feeling of uncertainty.

"Mrs. Prewitt," began Mr. Stone, motioning her into his room and partially closing the door, "has Miss Fitzgerald any relatives who would grieve if she were found dead some morning?"

Mrs. Prewitt's facial muscles were not prepared for this, but they hastily —and honestly—assembled themselves to signify alarm. Their owner followed suit with her voice.

"My heavens, Mr. Stone! What do you mean?"

"I mean has she a mother, perhaps, to whom the news of Miss Fitzgerald's sudden death might come as somewhat of a shock?"

"Mr. Stone! Don't tell me that child has heart trouble!"

"I'm afraid not. I'm afraid I'll have to use poison."

The facial muscles got somewhat beyond control at this point and registered utter stupefaction, relaxing only when Mr. Stone added:

"Or, to do it artistically, perhaps I should sneak up to her room some night, hold that precious music roll of hers over her face, pour it full of chloroform, and then hide the body in the piano."

With that, Mrs. Prewitt recognized that the present discussion was only an old argument that was being reopened, and the facial muscles, with a sense of relief, rearranged themselves to represent conciliation.

"Oh, now, Mr. Stone, you know she has to practice her singing lessons. How is she ever going to get into grand opera if she don't practice?"

"Grand opera!" snorted Stone. "It's the four-a-day for hers."

"Why, I think she sings real nice. Her teacher is wild about her, she says."

"Bunk, Mrs. Prewitt; all bunk. Those music teachers have to throw a fit over every new pupil or they'd starve to death."

"But you know she really has done choir work in Boston; and gave some concerts at the conservatory, too."

"Choir work, eh? Well, if she'd only stick to hymns, I could stand it—I always used to sleep well when I went to church—but those blasted scales would make 'Sweet Alice Ben Bolt' rise up and bite chunks out of her gray granite slab."

"All singers sing scales, Mr. Stone."

"I know that, but is there a union rule that says they have to sing them in the morning?"

"Norda goes to Giulio's in the afternoon for her fancy dancing and stage-deportment lessons. In the evening the other guests wants the piano."

"What does she want of fancy-dancing lessons? There's no song-and-dance teams used in grand opera."

"They're to make her graceful, that's all. A medium on East Eighty-fifth Street advised her to get an all-around training—told her she had a wonderful future coming to her."

"Now I *know* she hasn't a chance," derided Mr. Stone. "A medium! Hah! More bunk, Mrs. Prewitt."

"You wouldn't say so if you went to her once, Mr. Stone. She is the most clairvoyant woman I ever saw. Eye-talian, she is, with two big black eyes——"

"Those guineas are rough with their women, all right," muttered Stone.

"I don't mean black eyes like that," explained the landlady earnestly. "I mean the kind that looks right through you. She's told me the most *wonderful* things. Why, when I was——"

"I know, I know," interrupted Stone hastily. "I'll bet she's good, but if this Fitzgerald girl gargles any more scales while I'm asleep, you can go and ask your medium who's going to rent this room next month, because it won't be me, you can bank on that."

Mrs. Prewitt descended to the parlor and approached Miss Fitzgerald with the muscles of her face arranged to depict anxiety.

"Dearie," she began, "do you suppose you could arrange to take your dancing in the morning and your singing in the afternoon?"

"Mr. Stone is complaining again, I suppose," said Norda, pouting prettily. She had a mouth that looked as if it couldn't possibly have blossomed in Puritan New England.

"Yes, dearie. He wouldn't mind plain singing, he says, but them scales get his goat."

"If he would keep human hours, he wouldn't be disturbed," contended Norda. "Any one who lies in bed until ten deserves to be wakened."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," urged Mrs. Prewitt. "When you're a grand-opera star those will be your hours, you know. Theatrical folks are all like that."

This was really a stroke of diplomatic genius on Mrs. Prewitt's part. Softened by a vision of herself awak-

ing late in a huge, canopied bed, ringing for her maid to bring her coffee, and reading in the morning papers the accounts of her triumph in "Tosca" the night before, Norda ceased practicing and promised to have a talk with Giulio that afternoon.

The old dancing master arranged to put her in a morning class, and from then on Mr. Stone's daylight slumbers went undisturbed. He resumed friendly relations with Miss Fitzgerald, talked to her at the dinner table, and even teased her about one thing and another, particularly about grand opera and mediums.

"I hear there's a new Chinese clairvoyant down on Pell Street that's a marvel," he remarked one night when she and Mrs. Prewitt were alone with him in the dining room. "You ought to go see him. I hear he can tell you anything."

Then, when Norda and Mrs. Prewitt rose to the bait as usual with a request for further details, he continued:

"Yep, he can tell you anything. A friend of mine had a dish of chop suey down there the other night and afterward this clairvoyant chink told him just what was in it. My friend hasn't been feeling right since."

"Serves him right," sniffed Mrs. Prewitt. "Any one that'd eat that nasty stuff!"

"Oh, I don't know," Stone went on. "I was thinking of taking him one of these croquettes to try his second-sight on, but maybe I'm happier as I am."

"Don't let him bother you, Mrs. Prewitt," smiled Norda. "That's his second helping of croquettes."

"Oh, I'm a glutton for punishment," countered Stone cheerfully. "Anyhow, I know already what's in these croquettes. It's *my* second sight of it, all right—I remember this cigar band I left on my plate last night."

"Mr. Stone!" exclaimed Mrs. Prewitt, her facial muscles wavering painfully between alarm and indignation.

"I take that back, Mrs. Prewitt," laughed the manager. "It's only the little label off the loaf of bread; got in with the crumbs somehow. Don't fire the cook, please; she's the best you ever lured in here."

"I'm glad you think so," said the landlady, pacified. "Good cooks are scarce."

"Scarcer than prima donnas," agreed Stone. "And prima donnas," turning to Miss Fitzgerald, "prima donnas are scarcer than barroom clocks. I suppose you still intend to crowd Sembrich right off the phonograph records?"

"Not that, I hope," Norda replied. "But I'm going to be a Pink Sealer yet, you see if I don't."

"A Pink Sealer? What's a Pink Sealer?" asked Mrs. Prewitt.

"Some one who sings for the Pink Seal records, the kind that set you back about three dollars a disk," explained Stone. "Only big-time artists get on the Pink Seals."

"Oh, that's it," said Mrs. Prewitt. "Sounded like a wine agent at first. Well, Norda's going to be one, all right. We went to a crystal gazer's this afternoon, and the *things* he told us! He told Norda her name without asking a single question."

"You don't tell me!" gasped Stone in mock amazement. "Didn't she know her name when she went in?"

"Of course I did, Mr. Stone, but——"

"Then why pay some petty grafter a couple of dollars for news you got in your cradle? Any time you want to know who you are, Miss Fitzgerald, just drop in at my office. I'll tell you for nothing and throw in your address. That's the kind of a sport I am."

"But how did he *know* her name?" demanded Mrs. Prewitt. "That's the point."

"Oh, a dozen ways. Ten to one she

left her music roll in the hall and he took a slant at it while you were in the waiting room."

"That's funny," conceded Norda; "I did leave my music roll outside."

"With your name on the music, eh? Sure. You couldn't have made it any softer for him. I'll bet he told you how talented you are in a musical way and what a great future you have."

"Yes," somewhat reluctantly; "that's just what he said."

"It's a cinch he did. Marvelous gift, isn't it? He sees your name on a piece of music, notices that you are young and extra good looking—don't mention it, my dear—and with this miraculous second-sight of his he tells you that you have musical talent and will get ahead. What else did he tell you?"

"Oh, he said I was ambitious——"

"Of course, or you wouldn't be studying."

"And that I had a serious sickness when I was young——"

"All kids do."

"And that a dark man would come into my life."

"Sure he will. No girl could stand for a steady diet of blonds. I suppose the dark lad he meant was this funny-faced young cabaret singer that hangs around you all the time—the one with the comedy legs."

At this Miss Fitzgerald betrayed her comparatively recent arrival in the metropolis by indulging in that exotic phenomenon, a blush of maidenly embarrassment. She was quick to defend the young man in question, however.

"Jimmy's a dear," she stated decisively. "And he's clever. He has played the big time, Mr. Stone, and you know it. The only reason he is in a cabaret now is because it keeps him here in New York."

"Near you," supplemented Stone. "That's all right, but no girl's life could ever be influenced by a man with legs like that. Did the crystal gazer mention those legs?"

"No, he didn't."

"Well, he was a punk trance artist, then. I think his work was pretty lumpy all the way. Now, if you two are looking for a real trance thrower, the best in the business, why don't you come and catch Mary Ella Ray at the theater next week? I'll give you seats."

"Oh, I'd love it!" cried Norda. "I've heard of her for years and never seen her."

"You're on, then, ladies. Would Tuesday night be all right? Fine! Get some of the others here in the house and I'll make it a box."

Stone walked around to the theater and directly to his office. There he found Ranier, the man in charge of the crew of clever young assistants who were always a week or so ahead of the Ray act, laying their wires for her "revelations." Ranier was smoking his after-dinner cigar and looking over an evening paper.

"I think this murder mystery down on Long Island would be a good card for the madam to feature next week," he remarked as Stone entered. "It has all the marks of an inside job, only the detectives haven't got their evidence in shape yet to pinch the party who did the shooting."

"Are you going to have Miss Ray name the murderer?" asked Stone.

"No, we won't take any chances. I'll plant a question about the case and then she can say, 'An important arrest will be made very soon. Efforts of friends to shield the slayer will not avail much longer.' That will hold good no matter what happens, I should think, and as the case develops we can go a little stronger with our predictions."

"What else are you going to do?"

"Oh, I've fixed it with a pretty well-known young doctor in the neighborhood to let us steal his auto and have Miss Ray find it by second-sight in the

garage of a friend of mine over in Hoboken. Then the boys have one or two other plants ribbed up—nothing startling, I'm afraid."

"I'll give her one to spring Tuesday night," Stone said. "I'm giving a box party and I want to have some fun with one of the ladies. I'll see that she writes a question and I'll have a talk with Miss Ray about the answer."

"Tell her brother about it, too. He's a wonder at getting the big effect in a case like that. He does the talking, you know."

The Rays, brother and sister, formed a most effective pair of entertainers. Miss Ray was the only one mentioned on the billing. She was a frail, spinsterly looking little thing, with a prim manner of carrying herself, and a thin face, framed in golden ringlets. Her whole appearance was so untheatrical that all she did went for double value.

Her brother, Rennold, was the suave showman in his every action and word. He did not appear on the program, but his function in the act was fully as important as that of his sister. Alert, nimble of wit, ready of speech, he took charge of things at the rise of the curtain on each performance, and saw that nothing interfered with the smooth, rapid routine laid out. It was he who persuaded the committee to come upon the stage. It was he who sized up the volunteers when they got there, and it was he who handled any one whose overzealous precaution or half knowledge of Miss Ray's methods threatened to "crab the act."

Tuesday afternoon, Stone saw the Rays when they had finished their matinée performance.

"I'm having some friends out front to-night," he explained; "stage box on the left. One of them, a young lady from my boarding house, has a notion she is cut out for a grand-opera star. I'm going to have her write a question before she leaves for the theater to-night, and I want you to give her an answer that will leave her all out of breath."

"What'll she want to know?" asked the brother.

"She'll ask if she ought to go on with her studies. It's a moral cinch that's what she wants to know. She doesn't think about anything else."

"What shall I tell her?" Miss Ray inquired.

"Tell her she's great. Tell her she ought to go abroad and get a reputation. Tell her you see a vision of her name on the billboards at the Metropolitan Opera House and a line of frenzied opera fans stretching from the box office to the Battery. Tell her anything you want to, but make it strong."

"But can she sing at all?" Miss Ray wanted to know.

"Oh, I suppose so. I never heard her do anything but those la-la-la scales of hers, but they tell me she's pretty good. She's a good-looking, perky little trick, and has lots of personality. She would make a better actress than a singer, in my opinion."

"What's her name?" asked Ray.

"Norda Fitzgerald."

"Will she sign her question that way?"

"I'll tell her to," Stone assured him.

"Norda Fitzgerald," repeated Miss Ray, fixing it in her mind. "All right. You give me the cue to-night, Ren, and I'll give the lady some hot advice, right from the spirit world."

"Thanks. You don't have to know her question word for word. Even if she happens to ask about something else, she'll forget all about it after you tell her that some day the wops in the fourth balcony will be hammering dents in the brass rail when she takes her curtain calls."

"Leave it to us," said the Rays, and Stone went around to the boarding house smiling to himself.

"I hope you'll ask Miss Ray a ques-

tion to-night," he said to Norda at the dinner table. "Ask her what's the best treatment for a man with ludicrous legs."

"I shan't ask her any such thing," the young lady replied. "I might ask her a cure for the habit of sleeping until noon, though. That might interest you."

"Well, whatever you ask her, why don't you write it here, before you go to the theater?"

"Now?" Norda was plainly amazed. "Why, she couldn't do that!"

"She does it every day. Write your question here, fold it up, take it to the theater, and she'll answer it."

"Oh-h-h, I know," Norda surmised craftily. "You'd tell her what I wrote."

"No, no," Stone protested. "I don't want to see it. Don't let anybody see it. Write it in your room and bring it along in your hand bag or in your stocking or inside your rust-proofs; anywhere so long as it's in the theater when she is in her trance."

"My sakes!" gasped Mrs. Prewitt. "And she will read it?"

"Absitively."

"It ain't human," Mrs. Prewitt declared. "And, anyhow, she'll have to show me before I believe it."

"We'll try her," decided Norda, rising from the table. "I'll write my question right now."

"Do that," said Stone, "and sign your full name to it. Don't waste her time with any nonsense, either. Ask her about something important, see?"

"I know what I'll ask her, all right," Norda called back as she mounted the stairs, "and we'll see whether she's so wonderful."

When the bill had been run off down to the headline spot that night, Stone came and took a seat in the box with his guests.

"The Rays are on next," he whispered over Norda's shoulder. "Are you sure you have your question with you?"

"It's inside my glove."

"All right. Just so you can get at it to show that she read it correctly. When these two boys get through tricking those curtain calls, Miss Ray will begin."

The drop curtain rose on a parlor set, and Rennold Ray led his sister onto the stage with the courtly grace of a cavalier. In a few crisp sentences he outlined the nature of the act, and then began exercising his affable personality in the task of persuading a committee to come up and fill the semicircle of chairs on the stage. Simultaneously his keen-eyed young assistants seemed to spring up in all parts of the house, working the aisles and the boxes in a concerted effort to get the committee organized.

During this process, Norda gazed with lively interest at the quaint little figure in the center of the stage. Miss Ray stood looking over the audience with a slight smile, nodding graciously to each volunteer who came up the runway, and indicating to him where he should take his seat. She might have been the minister's aunt receiving guests in the Methodist parsonage at West Newton, Massachusetts.

When the usual group of motormen, octogenarians, and young men who didn't know what to do with their hats had been seated back of Miss Ray, her brother stepped to the footlights for a final word of explanation.

"I presume many of you have come here to-night with questions prepared which you desire Miss Ray to answer," he began. "For the benefit of those who have not, our young men will pass among you at this time with pencils and writing pads for those who desire them. When you have written your question, tear it from the pad and retain it. Do not show it to the assistant, nor to any one around you unless you choose.

"I call your attention to the fact that

we supply you with ordinary writing tablets and that they contain no carbon paper, trapdoors, springs, nor secret passageways. Keep the sheet on which you write, but please return the pencil. We jump to Atlanta next week, and the railroad fare is something terrible."

Sam Stone chuckled at this. "That's a crack at Dave Fish, his agent," he explained to the box. "Dave is over there in the second loge. He's been at Dave for weeks to get that jump broken at Richmond or some place, but Dave can't make the booking office see it."

"Ask about anything you want to," Ray was continuing glibly. "Love, business, lost articles, politics, relatives in the other world, anything at all, and Miss Ray will answer you later in her performance.

"While the questions are being written, Miss Ray will endeavor to entertain you with her latest spiritualistic mystery, 'The Haunted Cabinet.'"

This was the cue for the assistants to begin mingling in the audience again, distributing pencils and paper, and incidentally collecting the questions. Just what their methods were for learning what the questioners wrote was a professional secret with the Rays. No one outside the act really knew all the ways by which the trick was done, but there were stage hands who could testify that Ray's talk about the innocent nature of the writing pads was open to grave suspicion.

The question was really recorded several sheets from the top of the pad, it appeared, though the record was invisible and had to be "developed" in a room beneath the stage, just below where Miss Ray sat when doing her "trance stuff." Those golden ringlets of hers had their purpose, too, it seemed. They were said to hide a watch-case telephone receiver, through which the "spirits" read her the questions and likewise supplied such help in the answers as might be gleaned from a city directory and other data collected for the purpose in the room below.

During the time the questions were being ascertained, and while the assistants, gathered under the stage, were framing the answers, a post with a staple in it had been nailed upright on the stage, and Miss Ray's hands fastened to the staple with sealed tapes. A boxlike affair, resembling a Turkish-bath cabinet, was then placed over her, and with her head protruding through a hole in the top she sat and smiled at the audience and the surrounding committeemen. Her brother then placed a tambourine close by a curtain in the front of the box.

"Seems as if all the spooks I ever seen was in the Salvation Army before they died," commented Mrs. Prewitt. "It beats all how crazy they are about thumping a tambourine."

"Maybe some of them worked in minstrel shows," suggested Stone. "I'd like to put a high ball in front of that curtain and see what would happen to it. Look at that!"

The tambourine had begun to slam itself merrily against the side of the cabinet, and presently it disappeared within the curtains. A moment later it was propelled into view again, and had not ceased jangling on the floor when Ray snatched off the door of the cabinet and showed the committee that his sister's hands were still tied to the post behind her back.

"That woman couldn't work for me," declared Mrs. Prewitt. "I miss enough stuff around the house as it is."

The same trick was performed with various other articles, and then Ray announced that his sister was now ready to answer the questions. She seated herself in a chair near the footlights, and her brother adjusted a blindfold on her.

"Kindly raise your hand when Miss

Ray calls your name," he said. "All right, Miss Ray."

"I get a message from the left-hand side of the house, downstairs," began the seeress, speaking in high-pitched, nervous tones. "It is signed 'William Bond.'"

"William Bond, please," repeated her brother, scanning the audience. "There he is, Miss Ray."

"William, you want to know whether to buy any more of that stock you bought last week," said Miss Ray. "I would advise you to wait until next week. It will be safer."

"Yes, and the act will be in Atlanta," whispered Stone. "She's playing good and safe herself."

"I get a message from a young lady in love," continued the clairvoyant. "She is in the gallery. The signature is 'Mamie G.'"

"She's too shy to hold up her hand," smiled Ray, with a glance aloft. "Answer her anyhow, Miss Ray."

"You want to know if the young man with you really loves you. I don't think so, Mamie, or he would have bought you a seat downstairs."

"I don't think that was very nice," said Norda, "embarrassing the poor boy like that."

"Don't fret, youngster," Sam assured her. "They pull that one at every performance."

"From the right I get a message from a doctor," Miss Ray rattled on; "Doctor Henderson."

"Doctor Henderson, please," echoed the brother. "There he is, Miss Ray."

"The doctor seems to have lost something—I think it's a baby carriage"—laughter from the audience. "Wait—the image is clearer now. It wasn't a baby carriage; it was his automobile."

More laughter, and the doctor was told where to locate the missing machine.

"I get a message from a lady with rheumatism in the balcony," Miss Ray continued.

"That's always good for a laugh," commented Stone, smiling in sympathy with the chortling audience.

"But there is no signature," concluded the mind reader.

"Pass to the next one, then," said her brother.

"The next one is very indistinct. It seems to be from a young man named Norman, or Norton, or—no, that's wrong—it's from a young lady. I think the name is Norma—the image is very dim—the last name doesn't come—I can't——" And the little woman broke off, wringing her hands as if under a great mental strain.

Norda was tense on the edge of her chair, her eyes ablaze with excitement.

After a moment the high, staccato voice resumed: "I was wrong—the name is Norda—it's much clearer now—Norda Fitz—something—I can't get the rest of it."

"Any one by that name ask a question?" queried Ray.

Norda held up her hand, a somewhat trembly little hand, with a very moist palm. Stone looked at her delightedly out of the corner of his eye. "She's going to fall like a ripe peach," he decided.

"Did you write your question here in the theater?" queried Ray, coming toward the box.

Norda shook her head.

"At home?"

She nodded assent.

"Have you shown it to anybody?"

"No, sir; not to anybody," said Norda in a voice the performer could never have heard if he had not been leaning over almost within touching distance. "It's in my glove," she added.

"Thank you," Ray said, and then to the audience, as he returned to the center of the stage: "This young lady, who, I assure you, is not known to either Miss Ray or myself, has written

a question at home and concealed it in her glove without showing it to anybody. I shall have to ask your strictest attention while Miss Ray tries to read the question. It is a most difficult test."

"He's certainly putting on all the trimmings," remarked Stone to himself. "I hope her question wasn't about that young cabaret singer."

"I seem to see this young lady at a piano," began Miss Ray, her finger tips pressed to her temples. "She is singing, but she seems dissatisfied—in doubt about something. I should say she was wondering whether it was worth while to go on singing."

"Can you help her?" put in her brother.

Miss Ray waved an impatient hand at him.

"Don't speak, please—don't speak!" she exclaimed. "There is another vision forming. I seem to see this same young lady standing in some huge hall, before a great mass of people who talk in a strange language—there are many uniforms on the men, and the women are in evening gowns—she stands before a great red curtain." Norda's hand fluttered into Mrs. Prewitt's lap and clutched her by the wrist. "She bows and bows," continued the strange voice, "and her arms are full of flowers."

The voice stopped abruptly, and then, dropping its tone of exalted prophecy, resumed gently: "If I have seen truly, the young lady should aim at grand opera, by all means. I would suggest she study in Berlin."

Silently Norda turned and gazed, wide-eyed for a moment, at Mrs. Prewitt. Then the eyes filled with tears, and she buried her face on the landlady's shoulder. At that moment an usher entered the box and whispered to Mr. Stone, who got up, paused for a moment with a dubious glance at Norda, and, apparently thinking better of an impulse to speak, disappeared toward the box office.

"Sorry I have to leave you, folks," he said on his return a little later. "Mr. Porter is out there and tells me the manager of his house in Montreal has been taken to the hospital. He's sending me up there to take charge for a while. I can just make a train if I get a slant on me. So long. Some medium, eh, Norda?"

"Wonderful," said Norda almost reverently. "Thank you for the box, Mr. Stone."

"Not at all. See you soon." And he hurried away.

On his return, four weeks later, he noticed that Norda was not at the dinner table.

"Where's the kid?" he asked Mrs. Prewitt, nodding toward the chair the little singer had occupied.

"Why, didn't you know?" the landlady responded. "She's gone to Berlin."

Mr. Stone's knife clattered down on his plate.

"What?" he exploded.

"Sure. She took Mary Ella Ray's advice, drew out what she had in the bank, and away she went—sailed last Saturday. Why, what's the matter?"

"Oh, don't you *see* it?" Stone explained miserably. "That question was a frame-up—I knew she'd ask about her voice, and I fixed it with the Rays beforehand. I never thought she'd fall for it like that. God knows I didn't."

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed the landlady. "Still," cheerfully, "it may be the best thing she could do."

"Not a chance, Mrs. Prewitt; not a chance. A good little kid like her over there among all those foreigners? Not one in a thousand gets away with it. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about. Here—I don't want any more dinner; I feel like a chauffeur that's just run over a baby. Berlin! With that pitiful little voice of hers! Help!"

After a time, Sam Stone's conscience ceased bothering him, or at least he recalled the Norda Fitzgerald incident less frequently when a newly acquired wife and a gradually increasing family began to demand all his energy and thought. He had a nice flat in the Bronx and was very happy.

"I've brought you a new Geralda record," he announced to Mrs. Stone one night on his return to dinner; "a ballad, and it's a daisy."

"You're an old darling," said Mrs. Stone happily. "I just love her stuff."

"Well, you'll get a chance to hear the lady herself soon. We've booked her for our headliner next week."

"Why, I thought she was an opera singer."

"So did I, but it seems not. Marino is handling her and says she has been a riot in concert and vaudeville abroad. I grabbed her from him for her first appearance over here."

"Good for you, dear. My man always has his eyes open for the novelties, hasn't he?"

"Well, I took her on the strength of her records. They're good enough for me. I only hope she isn't some queer-looking freak with a skinny neck and a small-time wardrobe. Marino has no pictures of her—she doesn't land until Wednesday."

"I just know she'll be good," decided Mrs. Stone.

"She'd better be," said Sam. "Marino is asking five hundred a week for her."

The following Thursday, in his office, Stone was amazed when a card bearing the name "La Geralda" was followed by a furred and fashionable young lady who walked straight over to him and kissed him squarely on the cheek. It was Norda, with countless new charms added to her old ones, and, accompanying her, was a young man with peculiar legs.

Sam was inarticulate with amazement for an instant, but finally managed to inquire: "What's the idea?"

"I told Jimmy I was going to do that," announced Norda merrily. "He's a perfectly good husband and doesn't mind a bit."

"Are you Geralda?" demanded Stone.

"That's me."

"The girl I'm going to pay five hundred a week?"

"Thanks to my Berlin teacher and Jimmy's coaching on how to put a song over, I shall hold you up for just that figure, Mr. Manager."

"Well, I'll be teetotally, voluminously, and comprehensively hornswoggled!"

"I wasn't good enough for grand opera, Sam, but, you know, I *am* a Pink Sealer."

"You don't need to tell me—my wife keeps me broke buying your records."

"And I owe it all to you, you blessed old fox! I came straight here to tell you how grateful I am."

"Huh?" This was getting too deep for Mr. Stone.

"Oh, you needn't stall—Mrs. Prewitt told me all about that question you fixed up with the Rays, Sam, and I know I'll never get done thanking you. I never heard of anything so clever. You know, I never would have got up nerve enough to go abroad if you hadn't schemed to encourage me that way. Outside of Jimmy, you're the best friend I ever had, and that's honest."

Sam Stone looked at the earnest little face very intently for a moment before replying. Then he drew in a long, deep breath and let it out again.

"Why, that's all right, kid," he said heartily. "You don't need to thank me. I knew you had it in you all the time. You can't fool me on talent, you know." And he patted her on the shoulder without batting an eye. There are several reasons why Sam is a successful manager.

# Twinkle on Thirty-Three

By H. H. Knibbs

*Author of "Still-Going-North Stanley," "Homespun," Etc.*

**How "Twinkle," clinging desperately to the brake rods of No. 33 and dreaming dreams of lazy days in California, figured in a hold-up that was not of his planning. He called every man or child or dog he met, his friend—but he seldom paid railroad fare**

AS Stamp Lache rode down the windy tunnel of the cañon he had a strange premonition that this was to be his last "job." He had ridden seventy desert miles that day, and now as darkness drew the cañon walls closer and distorted the familiar landmarks he reined up and waited for his companion. From behind him came the creak of saddle leather and the heavy breathing of a horse. "Stubby," the lone accomplice of Stamp Lache, also reined in, inquiring as to what occasioned the pause. Stamp grumbled and spurred his tired horse. Stubby, who had no premonitions whatever, did likewise.

Far ahead of them twinkled the lights of Lenox; a tiny cluster of red dots in the wide emptiness of the desert night. The horses stepped briskly along the cañon trail as it widened to the dim gray stretch of roadway across the plain. Suddenly Stamp cursed. A spatter of rain struck his lean, hard face. Behind him he could hear Stubby growl. "Tracks," said Stubby.

Stamp Lache did not answer. His premonition, however, assumed absurd proportions.

At Lenox the riders entered the door-yard of an outlying house, knocked at the low dobe, and disappeared in a golden pathway of light that was shot with the hurtling silver of a heavy downpour. The horses stood with reins dropped and heads lowered wearily. Presently the door swung open and the riders slithered through the wet sand and led the horses to the rear of the dobe. When the men again appeared they were mounted on fresh horses.

They rode silently through the streets of the town, on out at its farther end, and across the tracks of the railroad.

"What's got you, Stamp?" queried Stubby, after a hesitant period of cogitation.

"Got a hunch," growled Stamp, viciously spurring his pony. That was all. And Stubby, accustomed to the vagaries of his leader, followed with head bent against the rush of rain.

Across the track they turned and rode west until the switch light of a long siding glimmered faintly through the bleak night. A quarter of a mile beyond the siding stood the water plug. No. 33 would stop there.

Stamp Lache dismounted and bent over the switch. Stubby sat watching down the track. Stamp filed at the switch-lock chain. His plan was simple and evident. No. 33 would slow down for the water plug and "take the iron" of the siding easily. This would cause the necessary confusion. The engineer would doubtless imagine that the switch had been left open by mistake. He would at once set the air

and stop the train. Then Stamp would take a hand in the future proceedings.

Stubby, listening, heard the faint rumble of the Overland, and immediately caught a glimpse of the long, swordlike flash of the headlight shattering through the rain. "You got to hurry, Stamp," he cautioned.

The severed chain clinked against the table of the switch. Stamp heaved, and the rails slid over grudgingly. He stepped to his horse and took a little parchment-wrapped cylinder from the saddle pocket. "You look after the head end," he growled. "I'll take care of the car."

The oblique sword of headlight broadened and swept on, throwing the station beyond into bold relief and running down the shimmering rails. In the distance, Stubby could see hurrying figures on the station platform. He dismounted and led the two horses back from the rails and tied them in a little depression cluttered with sagebrush.

Stamp swung along the siding, glanced back, and dropped in the darkness. Stubby hastened past him, and he also disappeared. The faint hiss of steam came through the night, then the heavy exhaust of the engine; slow, deliberate, quickening imperceptibly. Stamp shivered. "Got it—*bad*," he told himself. And "Stubby!" he called. "If we don't make it—so long."

Stubby squirmed and raised his head from the sodden ground. "All right. So long, then." And he again wondered what had disturbed his partner's usual coolness. Everything seemed to be going smoothly. They had arrived at Lenox not too soon nor too late. Their fresh horses were ready. The train was on time. "It's the weather," soliloquized Stubby as the roar and drift of the oncoming train grew heavier. As it happened, it was not the weather, but something more subtle, more intangible that had upset Stamp Lache's equanimity. Stubby knew that Stamp could answer for more than one such undertaking and for more than one nameless grave in the desert. In fact, Stubby himself had—but the train was roaring toward the switch points. Stubby loosened his gun and drew a long breath. A whirl of heat and steam; a thundering—the sharp "click" of wheels taking the siding, and Stubby rose and crept toward the palpitating monster that stood subdued for the nonce, as though puzzled and voicing its trepidation in a quickened throbbing. The air whistled and diminished. The brake shoes grumbled as they withdrew from the polished wheels. Stubby swung to the engine cab. The engineer turned to see that in Stubby's hand which forbade argument, and which precluded all unnecessary questioning. A lantern glimmered down near the rear Pullmans. "Cut out the express," said Stubby. "The boys are wet, and in a hurry."

When No. 33 left Albuquerque there was one passenger aboard who had not paid his fare. In fact, this special passenger seldom paid railroad fare. It was not preference but necessity which caused "Twinkle" to ride the brake rods. At Albuquerque he had embarked hastily. Thus far his journey had been in no way unusual save for the rain which the suction of the train drew beneath the express car, soaking Twinkle until he shivered and clung desperately to his narrow perch. Mile after mile he had hung on in a sort of waking dream; a nightmare of noise, spurring flakes of cinder, and the wild dashes of rain that drew in and chilled him.

Twinkle was not unaccustomed to his present mode of travel, but the added insult of a continuous cold bath dampened his usually serene outlook. That the company safe, directly above his head, held some eighty thousand dollars in gold was farthest from his im-

aginings. All that Twinkle thought of, save holding on, was the ultimate golden glow of a California sun and lazy hours of mountain highways, orange groves, almond trees, and perchance a strip of the blue sea at evening, with a driftwood fire and the whole outdoors for his kingdom. Twinkle was in no manner vicious, but rather prone to be a philosopher, loving his way of life for the freedom it gave him, and calling every man or child or dog he met his friend. Neither had he any desire to be classed as pugnacious, but rather he was timid, with an easy effrontery when necessary and an honesty but slightly dimmed through exigencies.

Had he known that No. 33 would blunder into a "holdup" that night it is questionable as to whether he would have embarked. Twinkle's star, despite the surrounding gloom, was in the ascendant, but, unlike Stamp Lache, train robber, killer, outlaw, he had no premonition save the one which warned him that should he become sleepy or numb and release his grip for an instant he would not see California again.

Station after station had been passed, and at each stop Twinkle had almost determined to alight and ease his stiffened muscles. But some instinct—perhaps the sheer stubbornness of the timid—caused him to lie close and sigh with relief as the train again took up its throbbing way. In fact, he grinned as he recalled the East Side fortune teller's prophecy; that he would soon undertake a long journey, see many new lands, and, after a period of vague battling in the dark—the fortune teller was not altogether clear as to this—he would emerge a man of wealth and distinction. And Twinkle grinned, assuring himself that at the present moment he would have considered two bits wealth, and a stool at a railroad eating house a kind of distinction.

Meanwhile, the rain whipped his sodden garments, and an occasional cinder stung his cheek. As the train slowed down approaching Lenox, he squirmed round and glanced from beneath the edge of the car toward the station window. Through the blur of rain he saw the face of the clock. It was just ten-thirty. In two hours he would arrive at Gallup, where he would disembark and find rest and sleep of a kind. He could stand it for two hours longer. He readjusted his weary body as the train rolled from the station.

He forgot, however, that No. 33 would stop at the water plug beyond.

As the brake beam tilted and the air set he started and tried to discern some landmark—something in explanation of the cause. He felt the wheels of his truck jolt over the switch points and heard the squelch of feet alongside the car. Caught! That was his first and startling impression. But No. 33 would not stop for a mere tramp, under the circumstances. Stiffly he drew from the brake beam and crawled from beneath the car. As he was about to rise he heard voices above him. He crouched. Then came the rattle of a lock and the cautious tread of some one in the car. Suddenly a spurt of fire shot from the vestibule between the two forward cars. With the crash of the shot came an echo from the brush a few feet away. Twinkle saw a dim figure lunge from the vestibule, strike the ground, and lie still. Again came a red flash from the brush, and glass jingled and clinked round him. A holdup—and the messenger had been shot!

Twinkle felt a wave of unaccustomed heat sweep over him, tightening his throat, burning in his breast. A cowardly trick—to shoot down a man from the brush! Twinkle crept, shivering, toward the fallen man, his first impulse being to render him assistance. Again the tongue of flame spat from the brush, and Twinkle dropped with a searing pain across his shoulder. He was close to the messenger now. He

could see the dull glitter of something near the messenger's upturned hand. The burning pain bit into him, and Twinkle saw red. With a rush he pounced upon the messenger's gun, pumped in a shell, and leveled at the brush. Once more a thin flame split the darkness, and Twinkle fired. Then came the throbbing of the engine.

Stubby, backing down the steps of the engine, turned and ran for the horses. His chief's "hunch" had been real. Without the leadership of Stamp, Stubby was as a lost child. All his borrowed courage was swept from him, leaving him a terror-stricken and helpless individual. Had he not dared to tell Stamp that it was too big a job for two men?

Men came running. Some one called, and Twinkle had sense enough left to answer.

"Here's one of 'em," said the fireman, bending over Twinkle. "He's hit, too."

Twinkle raised himself. "Mebby," he said succinctly. "But I figured I only got one."

The conductor joined the group that gathered about the tramp. "Come on, get him aboard!" he ordered. "Back down to the main line."

"You might get the other fella, too," said Twinkle. "He's over there in them bushes—or, if he ain't, there's somethin' over there where he was."

"They got Jim," said the conductor. "But we got you."

"Your wires is crossed," said Twinkle, now on his feet and guarded by the fireman. "I was ridin' the brake. Seen the shootin' and the messenger get his. I clumb out and took a hand —and this is what I get for it."

"You can tell that to the judge," said the conductor.

"I'm willin'. But if you dassent go get that fella I fixed—why, I will."

"Oh, no! You'll stay right here. Get him aboard, Bill!"

"There's another one somewhere," said the engineer, pushing through the group. "This ain't him."

"Plenty of 'em, likely," said the conductor.

Twinkle began to feel a cold terror creep through him. "Honest—to—gosh, fellas, I was fightin' for the comp'ny," he said. "You ain't givin' me a fair shake. I tell you they's a guy over there full of buckshot. I'll go first."

"Mebby he's right," said the fireman. "I heard some shootin' from this side."

So Twinkle, escorted by several of the crew with leveled guns, poked his way toward the brush from whence had come the shots. Beneath a low clump of sage they found Stamp Lache or what was left of him, for Twinkle's shot had been at short range and had been effective. "I was tellin' you," said Twinkle. Then he fainted.

The train backed into Lenox. Wires were dispatched ahead, advising the authorities at Gallup of the holdup. Twinkle was revived and questioned. The bodies of the messenger and the outlaw were aboard. Then the local constable at Lenox claimed Twinkle as his prisoner. Argument ensued. The conductor decided that Twinkle would have to stay aboard. No. 33 pulled out, and the run to Gallup was without incident.

At that station, however, there was a stronger determination to hold Twinkle. Engines were changed, and, during the interim, Twinkle explained his presence aboard the Overland. He modestly disclaimed any pretense to courage and dilated upon his love for the open and freedom. Popular opinion was with him. As the train again began its long journey toward the coast, a purse was made up among the passengers and presented to Twinkle with due formality. He had saved their money, possibly their lives. And he had avenged the killing of the messen-

ger. Only the conductor and the other messenger knew of the eighty thousand dollars in gold in the company safe, and they were not inclined to mention it.

Twinkle became a momentary hero, and made the best of his opportunities. A doctor on the train attended to his wound. The diner was thrown open, and Twinkle was fed and favored with every attention. He was not averse to bottled beer, and he expanded under its influence. Obsequiously the porter made up a berth for him—a lower—and Twinkle indulged in the twofold comfort of sleep and warmth. For two days and nights he traveled in state, drawing near the haven of his dreams. Yet toward the end of his journey, as the train sped down the pass above San Bernardino, he became restless. He was in California. Quietly he withdrew from the smoking compartment as No. 33 drew into Glendale. No one missed him until the train arrived at Los Angeles. Advised ahead of time, several reporters were on hand, eager to get the news. Twinkle was not to be found. Passengers and crew took up their belongings and departed upon their various ways. The papers gave a half column to the affair and the public quickly forgot it.

Several weeks after the holdup, Twinkle, journeying along the seacoast road toward Santa Barbara, was overtaken by a short, stubbily built, nondescript man who acted more like a lost dog than anything else. He was hungry and footsore. Twinkle, from some hidden resource, produced the wherewithal for food and lodging at the next village. They tramped together for days, Twinkle with an eye to the far blue ocean and the coastwise hills; the other with no apparent object save that of roaming from place to place. They became friends, and exchanged experiences. The stranger never questioned Twinkle as to his ability to pay for their food or beds. One night as they sat by their wayside fire, Twinkle turned to his companion. "Been thinkin'," he said slowly. "Been thinkin' I got to call you somethin'—and I guess it'll be 'Stubby.' You take the part, all right."

The other's hand went to his hip, then slid to his side. Evidently Twinkle knew nothing of the nearness of his chance shot. "And you was sayin' you been all over the West. Well, I come through on No. 33 meself. Two months ago." Twinkle watched his companion.

The other's eyes blinked strangely. "I heard about it—in the papers," he hazarded.

Twinkle nodded. "Papers said a tramp cleaned out the gang that held up No. 33."

Stubby blinked again.

"But them papers is awful liars—at times," he continued.

Stubby sighed and relaxed. "Mostly," he said.

But when Twinkle awoke next morning and gazed across the blackened sticks of their fire, Stubby was gone. Twinkle felt quickly of the money belt beneath his shirt. "Huh! He wouldn't have nerve enough to lift a chicken," he commented, and whistled as he took to the road.

There were shady pepper trees from the low picket fence to the obscure doorway of the little ranch house. The sun played changes in light and shadow as the drooping branches swayed gently. Twinkle was dusty, hot, and thirsty. He hesitated at the gate.

"If you-all is wantin' a drink, come in." The voice was friendly, hospitable. The speaker was invisible.

"Yes'm. It's right warm."

"I call it hot, but I been hoein' beans all mornin'. I'm settin' on the front steps. They ain't no dog."

Twinkle grinned. "Yes'm. I wasn't goin' to buy one."

"I reckon not. Come from the South?"

"Yes'm. Mostly."

"M-m-m! Goin' to Frisco?"

"Mebby." And Twinkle passed up the walk, stooping to avoid the low branches.

On the steps of the small ranch house sat a woman. She was plump, dark, and rather pleasing to the eye. The sleeves of her plain gingham were rolled up. Her bare, brown arms were strong and smooth. Twinkle hesitated, glancing about. The place was neatly kept. There was no evidence of masculine occupancy. He stepped to the corner of the house and tilted the olla, replacing the cup carefully after he had enjoyed the cool water. "That's good water—no alkali."

"Spring—back in them hills. You hungry?"

"Some. But I can pay."

"If you kin, I charge two bits. If you can't, I don't charge. Folks has got to eat."

"Yes'm."

Twinkle still held his hat in his hand, smiling.

"Put it on. You done showed you was polite. And it's hot."

"Yes'm. It's hot."

"The spring is back there, up that trail." And the woman rose and paused with her hand on the lintel.

Twinkle put on his hat, and marched toward the bucket which stood near the corner of the house. The woman sighed and turned as though to enter the house. "Men is the worst," she said, half to herself. "No better than calves till they're growed. Then they is like to be disappointin' critters."

Still, the woman was evidently pleased. This tramp had said he was able to pay for his meal, and, moreover, took a hint. It was quite a distance to the spring.

When Twinkle returned with the water, he came to the back door and handed the bucket to the woman. "Reckoned you'd fill the olla," she said, eying him questioningly.

"No'm. You would be cookin' dinner and want this here in the kitchen."

"M-m-m!" And the woman busied herself preparing the meal.

"Nice place—and tidy," ventured Twinkle from his seat in the doorway.

"Because they ain't no man hangin' around pertendin' to work it," said the woman good-naturedly.

"They was a man," said Twinkle. "I seen a pair of overalls hangin' on the fence by the spring."

The woman hesitated, turning from the stove to face him. "Yes. And I can say, honest and free, things has run better since he lit out. He was my husband. My name is Lache."

Twinkle blinked. "Yes'm. My name is Twinkle. Used to be Samuel—Sam Tibbets—a long time ago. But I been 'Twinkle' for quite a spell."

"On account of them eyes," said Mrs. Lache, sighing. "I know. Folks takes you to be good-natured."

"Mostly, ma'am. But I *kin* git mad."

"No man's a man that can't."

"But I don't," he added.

"Them's the best kind. Here's your dinner."

Twinkle spluttered and splashed in the tin basin, dried his hands and face, and entered the kitchen. After he had eaten, he gravely proffered twenty-five cents to Mrs. Lache. She accepted it rather hesitatingly. "Of course I kin git along alone, but you don't know of a man who wants to work for his board a spell, do you?"

"I dunno. I kin pay for mine."

"M-m-m! So you said. They's a lot to be done on them beans and that alfalfa. My man he left two months ago; said he was goin' over to New Mexico to look at some land. He used

to go away frequent. I ain't heard from him since."

"Too bad, ma'am."

"Oh, I'm used to *him*. But that don't get the work done."

"No'm. Howcome, you done well, as I can see."

The woman smiled. "I had some help, but not reg'lar. Tramps and such comin' and goin' and doin' as little as they could for board. Some left and some I fired, bein' no good. I can generally tell a man by how he acts."

"Yes'm. Thanks."

"Oh, you're like the rest of 'em. Jest let a hen look sideways at a rooster and he forgets to keep on pickin' up his livin', and starts to fluffin' up and actin' foolish. Seems like he's acceptin' compliments to hisself when they's meant for others."

"But you was meanin' me, ma'am. I seen it in your eye."

Plump Mrs. Lache laughed. "Go 'long. You're too smart to work much."

Twinkle bridled a little, then smiled. "Mebby. I'll be sayin' good-by, ma'am."

"Well, if you come this way again, you know where to get a meal and right good water."

And Twinkle departed, closing the gate carefully and glancing back from time to time until the little ranch house, with its sheltering pepper trees, was a dot in the distance.

But the meal had made him lazy. He loafed along, whistling and enjoying the unexpected as he came upon vista after vista of smooth green hills and blazing beds of poppies. Finally he stopped and sat down, rolling a cigarette in the shade of a wayside oak.

"I dunno," he said. "I dunno."

Nevertheless, he did know, for presently he rose and set off, retracing his steps toward the distant ranch house. As he neared the gate he heard voices and paused. A man was speaking, and the familiar voice of Mrs. Lache questioning at intervals. Twinkle lifted the latch of the gate. "Yes," said the man's voice. "They got him. We had a job to do. Stamp had a hunch it was to be his last, I guess, for he acted queer. A guy what was ridin' the bumpers rolled off and did for Stamp. I never seen him—too dark. And I lit out."

"And that's the 'land lookin'' my Stamp was doin'? I knowed Stamp was wild when I married him, but I never thought he'd take to holdin' up trains. And you——"

"Don't go blamin' me," said the man's voice. "I was his pal in the old days. He hunts me up and says we can make a piece of money easy. I was tired of punchin' cattle. I goes with him on that job."

Twinkle shivered. The man's voice seemed familiar now. Twinkle thought he could hear the woman sobbing. Then suddenly she burst forth in anger. Above her words came the infrequent voice of the man. Finally she subsided. The man spoke: "If you think like that, ma'am, I can tell you this: I ain't sayin' Stamp was any too good and you ain't the one to tell me where I get off. Accordin' to Stamp, you got some money hid away—and I want it."

Twinkle's ears burned, and he felt a choking sensation. He flung open the gate and marched up the pathway. The man started back as he appeared, and Mrs. Lache, drying her eyes with her apron, rose and welcomed Twinkle's presence with an exclamation.

"You beat it!" And Twinkle pointed toward the gate.

Stubby, the erstwhile companion of Twinkle, hesitated. Twinkle made a quick movement toward his hip pocket. Stubby turned and ran down the pathway.

A week later, Twinkle sat on the steps, smoking and enjoying a rest after a strenuous day in the bean patch.

From within the house came the welcome sound of cooking as Mrs. Lache prepared the evening meal. Twinkle cogitated.

"I dunno," he reiterated. "It's a mighty queer deal. Here I goes and bumps off a fella in the dark, not meanin' any harm to any one, and kills the husband of this here angel, and she don't know I done it. I dunno. From what she says kind of sideways and from how she acts, I *could* mebby settle down here for life. Life's a long time. I dunno. She kind of fancies me, I reckon, 'cause I got good manners and don't git mad, howcome I *kin*. And I got some cash. If I tell her, I gets in bad. If I takes hold and marries her and settles down and hoes beans the rest of my life, I'm doin' more'n he did, from what she says. He only married her. He never hoed no beans. I dunno. She reckons I'm some little hero, buffaloin' that there Stubby off'n the ranch. Gee, I was scared. So was he. But he was scared most."

"Twinkle Tibbets! This bucket is empty again."

"Yes'm." And Twinkle rose and walked toward the spring.

When he returned, Mrs. Lache was standing in the doorway, apparently waiting for him. She said nothing, however, until they had finished supper. Then she came out and sat with him on the steps. "That man—the one you run off, he told me some bad news."

Twinkle trembled inwardly. "Yes'm."

"About Stamp—my husband—that was."

"That was?"

"Yes. He got killed. It was a kind of accident, on the railway."

"Yes'm. I'm powerful sorry, ma'am."

"I knowed you'd be. Stamp had a way with him, but he never worked much."

"Yes'm. I—I done pretty fair on them beans so fur, eh?"

"You done beautiful." And for some reason supposed to be unknown to Twinkle, Mrs. Lache suddenly burst into tears. Twinkle was embarrassed beyond words. "There, ma'am. Don't take on like that. I wish he was livin' this minit. I say it. I—I—wish he was."

Still Mrs. Lache wept. "Wishin' don't do much good," she sobbed. "I'm a lone woman, and so much work ahead."

"Yes'm. And I'm a lone man, and consid'able work ahead likewise. If you was willin'——" And Twinkle gulped and stammered.

Mrs. Lache dried her tears. "Sam Tibbets, you don't know what you're sayin'."

"Mebby I don't, ma'am. But if you was willin', I could go over to Ventura and talk to that parson. I got a little put by, and I sure want to do the right thing by you. If there's any man ought to, it's me. Seems it worked out that way from the start. If your man got killed by a accident, some one is responsible, like. If it ain't me, who is it?"

Mrs. Lache murmured something about Providence. Twinkle squirmed, but held to his theme with courage. He was about to proffer himself and his services in a more definite manner when the woman turned to him with glowing eyes. "If you're feared I'll be talkin' about Stamp after—from now on—why, I won't. He died sudden."

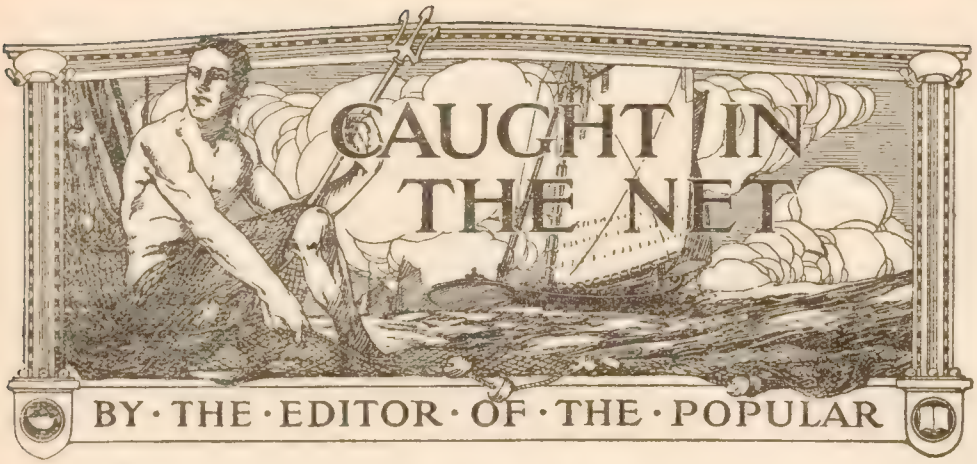
"Yes'm," said Twinkle quickly. "And I won't talk about it later. It ain't good manners."

"I always knowed you was jest plumb gentle. Now, Stamp—he had spells when I was scared of him."

"Yes'm. But you needn't to be scared of me. If I'll do——"

"I was goin' over to Ventura in the mornin' with the eggs and butter."

"Yes'm. So was I."




## HIGH DAYS

WHEN Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in his best warlike manner, was celebrating "The New Army in Training," he wrote these words: "They were all truly thankful that they lived in *these high days.*"

To the joy of that great man, the present humble writer would like to oppose two pictures. Their only merit is their truth. They are the product of five months at the actual front, not a few journalistic hours at officers' mess.

The first picture is that of a town where the soldiers live. In Nieuport every house is a ruin. Many houses are graveyards, where, under the tumble of bricks, lie the bodies of soldiers and civilians. Those pluperfect modernists, the howitzers, have smashed the work of centuries. To raze Nieuport isn't like gunning Hoboken, which might be a gain. There was a time when people built beautifully, and the towns of Flanders were built in that time. The destruction is more thorough and enduring than that of earthquake, for an earthquake lets you rebuild. Here, the daily shell fire keeps flat the wreck it first made, and you go on living with the shattered and the dead. Nieuport is gloomier by far than a graveyard, where the dead lie orderly at peace. Here the dead lie scattered under heaps of rubble and are daily disturbed by fresh guns.

The other picture is that of wounded men. The quality in men wounded on the field that leaves the strongest impression is that of their patience. After the petulance of invalids in sanatoria, and convalescents in city hospitals, it is appealing, this long patience of soldiers. All races show that. They have learned to sink their individual case out of notice. They regard themselves as part of the general scheme, and, being now impedimenta, they don't want to create trouble. We have brought up a man on a stretcher and left him lying for half an hour by the side of the road while the dressers prepared more men for our car. He would lie there without a murmur. We have put three stretcher loads into the car, and then hung around for thirty or forty minutes for the fourth and last. The men, if not too weak, will chat with each other. But not a word comes out of them because of the delay. This, remember, is the modern man, that neurotic weakling, who growls if a trolley car is tardy. Apparently the rule is, if life is hard enough, it makes heroes out of average men. The stuff was there all the time, under our modern luxury and indoor softness.

With those severely wounded, there is a stricken silence that nothing disturbs, no jolting of the car nor noise of guns, for nothing reaches their consciousness. One man we stretched across the tonneau of a touring car. An ulster lay on the floor of the car. He lay there heavily for the three-mile run, and we only realized how grievously he was hurt after we had lifted him inside the convent. For, returning to the car to put on the ulster—the evening had turned chilly—we found the coat soaked with his blood till it was heavy. Often, after a full day, our stretchers of white canvas are red with blood from end to end. We leave them out next day to bleach and dry under the sun, after washing them thoroughly.

If Mr. Kipling were to lend a hand with the broken products of "these high days," he would modify his mood from ecstasy to pity.

## A CATALOGUE PASTORAL

EVEN more than the brilliant seed catalogue that flaunts its flowers in our urban eyes and arranges its fruits under our watering mouths, we enjoy the perusal of the farm catalogue that periodically comes into our hands, for here are unfolded all the bucolic wonders and joys of which we only dare to dream. Pictures by the score adorn the alluring text, and, as we read, enraptured by the rural visions conjured up, we mentally deplore and denounce our lot among the apartment cliff dwellers; and we silently scorn the cowardice that keeps us from getting back to nature and living as man was designed to live. And our shame is not lessened by reading of braver souls who broke the shackles of business and city society, and fared forth to win a heritage from the soil. Behold this man, to quote from our inspiring catalogue: "F. H. Morse bought a semiabandoned farm for six hundred and fifty dollars. A few years later he took two thousand dollars worth of apples from the place in a single year. Most of these trees were growing wild in the pastures." Another young man, named Pierpont, went into debt to achieve his purpose. As the pamphlet says: "Ten years ago he bought a farm, giving a mortgage for seven thousand dollars. He keeps Holstein cows and sells milk wholesale at the door. Besides paying off the original mortgage, he has a farm worth ten thousand dollars and the stock is worth at least five thousand dollars more."

Our chronicler of the farm catalogue goes on to assure us that we can do as well, in all likelihood, better, but still we remain slaves of the office and the apartment. He feels our hesitation and our doubt, so he quotes statistics of the Federal government to prove that the farmer, on his little foothold, is the happiest and most independent creature on earth. To clinch his argument he gives us an extract from our favorite newspaper, which lifts its siren song as follows:

"Perhaps you have not yet caught the spirit of this movement toward the land. But just remember this, the thing which all these other people missed is the thing which you are going to miss some day. The longing which they now have is the longing which you are going to have before you die. And the sooner you get that longing and the sooner you satisfy it, the better for you. There are no longer any clodhoppers in the country. The clodhoppers are in the city. There are no longer any jays on the farm. The jays are in the factory. There are no longer any slaves punching mules. The real slaves are punching a clock."

We confess we are stirred, and there is an impulse to draw out our bank balance, catch a train, and be on our way to one of the many extraordinary oppor-

tunities described in word and picture throughout this idyllic catalogue. But there are so many unexpected chances fairly coaxing us to take them that we are bewildered about which to choose. There are so many aged farmer-philanthropists ready to retire for us and leave us their perfect properties, and there are so many young landowners ready to share their good fortune with us! In the past, we have imagined ourselves the proud possessors of one or another of these charming places. But this time we pick a rare gem to dream over. Permit us to use the Theocritean word picture of our prized catalogue:

"Country Store. One Acre. $1,400: Located on the maple-shaded street of one of New Hampshire's far-famed villages, away from the roar of the city strife, where the bees hum drowsily and life holds something besides a mad rush for money; directly across from church, town hall, library, and school; two deliveries of mail daily; headquarters for stage line; telephone and trading center for a large surrounding country; fine old colonial house of twelve large rooms, deep open fireplaces, before whose hearths the topics of the day have been discussed by men whose names illumine the pages of history; surroundings like this have given us men like Daniel Webster; 40x50-foot barn and large carriage shed; here is an opportunity to do a comfortable business without too much hard work and lead an easy life——"

That is but half of it. We pause to draw breath and meditate. Dull must be the imagination that cannot supply the rest of the details, and poor must be the pocket that cannot afford such a New England bonanza. As for us, if we were not so bound by business and cliff dwelling——

## AN AMERICAN CAREER

ONE of the best books we have read in the last year is the autobiography of that veteran financier and sportsman, Anthony Dimock. He calls it "Wall Street and the Wild." It has the flavor of the Elizabethan pioneers, who won fortunes and pushed into fresh territory. It tells of money madness and its cure. The cure that Dimock found was in the cool sanity of the out-of-doors: Fishing and hunting with the camera, living in far places, trips with deep-sea trawlers, camping with Indians, and finally a home in the Happy Valley of the Catskills. He played a wild and dominant part in the early speculation of Wall Street. While still a boy, he was the master in buying and selling gold. His pages give the thrill of gambling for immense stakes in a rocking market. But he found a saner zest when he stepped out from Change, and rediscovered the natural world of quiet rivers and forest life.

His has been a typically American career in its vivid contrasts, the wide hosts of people he has known and called friend. He has known everybody: Beecher and Jay Gould, John Burroughs and Edison. His life has that touch of flamboyance which goes with unlimited opportunity. On a day when he was "feeling good," he would go up the Hudson River and purchase a "castle" for his home. Or he would buy up a village, boom it, and make it into a city. The quality back of all his daring was imagination. He made and lost fortunes, but he never fell so far but he could get up and take another chance in the infinite game of life.

There are certain life stories which reveal America as a different arena from any in fixed Europe. The histories of Mark Twain and Anthony Dimock

and a thousand other unabashed adventurers show our country as young yet in time and mood, a playground for high spirits.

## THE DECLINE OF THE STREET OF JEWELS

BECAUSE, in the days when America was young, the lassies of old New York favored a winding, tree-lined byway for their evening strolls, some burgher, whose heart was not without romance, gave to the road the name "Maiden Lane." The city grew, and the roads became streets. The trees were uprooted and structures of brick and stone took their place. By some strange chance the goldsmiths, the silversmiths, and the men who dealt in precious gems congregated in the street where once the lads and the lassies made eyes and chatted and, no doubt, made love.

Maiden Lane has been the center for a hundred years of the diamond trade of the western world. It is so to-day, but its glory is fading. There was a time when from its head at Broadway to its foot at the towering structure known as the Jackknife, where it merges with Liberty Street, every store, every office, every nook, every cranny of the famed Lane was given over to gems or precious metals. In its skyscrapers hundreds of lapidaries worked with exquisite care on rubies, pearls, diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, fashioning them for such settings as would add to their charm and beauty. Goldsmiths, silversmiths, and engravers labored at tasks little less delicate. In the safes, on the display tables, and on the workbenches of office and shop were jewels that represented a king's ransom. Men with tens of thousands of dollars, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars, in precious stones in their portfolios went about the streets as nonchalantly and as safely as anywhere in all New York. No section of the city was more secure or more carefully guarded. There was a "dead line" two blocks north, below which professional thieves dared not pass. Detectives and secret-service men watched the district like hawks, for if there was any big diamond mystery or any smuggling to be traced, it usually was through the Lane of Many Gems.

But now the Street of Diamonds is losing luster. The lapidaries have been crowded out into John Street, Fulton Street, or Nassau. The silversmiths and the goldsmiths have been shunted into other thoroughfares. Every one in the trade still keeps a Maiden Lane address—for the name "Maiden Lane" is the hall mark of aristocracy in the jewel world still—and he who does not hail from the Street of Jewels is not to be classed among the elect.

The secret-service men and the detectives are more numerous than ever, but they watch over more than the lengths of Maiden Lane. Never in all the history of America was the diamond dealer so busy as now. Never was there such a demand for precious stones, but you would not think so from the appearance of the once-brilliant Street of Jewels.

Where show windows used to blaze with sparkling gems, you now are likely to see lingerie or toilet articles. The store of a jeweler once world famed now is possessed by a retailer who has made millions on five and ten-cent goods. Where once the most wondrous display of pearls on this side of the Atlantic was to be seen, a quick-lunch gentleman is doing a thriving business.

The glamour, the glory, the poetry, the beauty, and the charm have gone from the Street of Diamonds.

It has felt the blight of common, iconoclastic retail trade.

# The Impostor

By Ralph D. Paine

*Author of "Jerry Sits and Looks On," "The Vengeance of Antonio," Etc.*

**"Don't be a copy cat. It will never get you anywhere." An excellent piece of advice, but this near-Yale man turned it down to play the impostor**

HIS mother was a pious widow who managed to scrape along by renting rooms to Yale students, and his name was John Wesley Rand. As a little shaver he sold newspapers on the campus before and after school hours, doing a brisk business because of his cheery manner and ready-witted assurance. Undergraduates took a fancy to him, and now and then he was given a ticket to a football or baseball game. He became a Yale "heeler" of the most fanatical sort, and a man who went to Harvard excited his pity and contempt. It was his boyish ambition to be a "mascot," attached to a varsity team in a semi-official capacity. He knew the athletic scores and records of twenty years far better than he did his arithmetic or spelling book.

Now all this was immensely interesting to young John Wesley Rand, but it could hardly be called a settled or lucrative career, and his mother cherished hopes of making something of him. She coerced him into entering the high school, and by this time he was too old to peddle newspapers, and also he considered it beneath him. He still haunted the campus, however, and earned a little money by collecting bundles for a laundryman, but he no longer worked willingly. In his envious eyes those lucky students were loafing through four years of careless happiness, wearing good clothes, spending money, stamped as gentlemen wherever they went. This was what attracted him, and he was blind to the serious aspects of the campus life.

It was within the power of John Wesley Rand to prepare himself for Yale in the high school and work his way through like many other youths of sterling stuff, but he had no desire to be a shabby "grind." By degrees, he was becoming that occasional type, the college counterfeit. At eighteen he preferred to buy his clothes of Moses Einstein, the secondhand dealer, who hung about the dormitories and snapped up bargains in tailor-made garments from reckless young men who were short of cash. There was no louder "rah, rah, rah" than his when Yale won a victory, and he stayed up with the crowd when a celebration was in order.

An uncle owned a small machine shop, and he offered John Wesley a chance to learn the trade. The boy rebelled, but he was afraid of his mother's anger, and sullenly he put on the overalls and dirtied his well-kept hands. A month of probation and the uncle decided that while John Wesley might possibly be good for something else, he was certainly hopeless in the shop. The dismissal pleased the boy, and he was again the dapper idler whom it was so easy to mistake for a Yale man.

This time he chose his own job. It was as a clerk at small wages in a very

exclusive Chapel Street haberdasher's which catered to the college trade. This was a congenial atmosphere. Elegant sophomores lounged in to look over the newest things in shirts and ties, and exchanged the latest campus gossip. John Wesley Rand listened and made acquaintances who called him "Jack." He began to be consulted as an authority in matters of taste, and was referred to as an arbiter in disputes over past athletic performances.

He first noticed the girl when she passed the store in the early evening. Standing in the doorway, he gazed after her, and his interest quickened. She was pretty, of course, or he would not have picked her out of the crowd on the brightly lighted pavement. It was one of his poses to be a connoisseur at this sort of thing. The pattern of Yale man whom he admired had a discerning eye for the girls who walked on Chapel Street after supper.

The girl passed again a night or so later, and the dashing John Wesley regarded her with an attention so frank and open that she was conscious of it, and he perceived the faintest trace of a smile. This emboldened him, and he slipped away from the store to overtake her. Adroit was his method of address, graceful his apology, and she took no offense. It was unconventional of her, not a doubt of it, but how else was a girl to meet an attractive fellow of this kind when none of them came to her own home? John Wesley expected to have an evening off in the middle of the week, so he informed her, and he would be waiting to see her pass the College Street corner at eight o'clock.

This was how the attachment began. It might have been a flirtation or an escapade, but it turned out to be neither. John Wesley fell in love, or deceived himself into thinking so for the time, and Jennie Robinson took him seriously. Instead of meeting on the street, he went to her house and learned to know her parents and the numerous little brothers and sisters. She possessed an intrinsic refinement which appealed to his fastidious ideas. For a little while John Wesley Rand was able to hide from her the fact that he was made of baser metal, a cheap alloy which did not ring true. At length, however, Jennie's clear-eyed wisdom revealed to her a glimmer of the fact, and she said, while they were on the way, in a trolley, to dance at the beach:

"This college stuff is bad for you, Jack. I've been worrying about it. You are just a New Haven boy with a high-school education and a living to make, and no easy mark of a dad to shell out an allowance. There's no sense in your fooling yourself into thinking you are a Jerry Altemus or a Bob Sedgwick with rooms in Vanderbilt Hall."

The attack was unexpected. The haberdasher's clerk had assumed that Jennie worshiped the ground he walked on. It was a privilege for her to know a chap of his manners and style. His face was a trifle red, and his voice showed annoyance as he told her:

"I don't get you, Jen. Why the harsh language? In my position, with Wallace, Hamm & Co., a fellow has to dress the part, doesn't he, and be polite to people? A boob would last about a minute."

"It isn't that," said Jennie, a shade wearily, as though she had braced herself to attempt a task and found it very difficult. "You have been keeping company with me all through the winter, Jack, and about all I've heard from you is campus chatter. It amused me at first, but—but—I can't help feel that it is spoiling you."

"I thought you liked college stories," he cried in an injured manner. "Everybody does. Why, the magazines are full of 'em. And I have given you the inside dope right off the bat."

"But you don't tell them as if you were an outsider, Jack. You are merely looking on, you know. Can't you realize that?"

"Confound it, I grew up on the campus, adopted as a pet by one class and then by another," he protested angrily, puzzled by her persistence. "That was when I was a newsie. What difference does it make, anyhow? I might have worse faults."

They were drawing toward a tragic break, but the girl did not flinch from the consequences. It was a supremely vital issue for her. Once for all she must know whether or not John Wesley Rand was an impostor at heart. If she could not compel him to see himself as she beheld him, then they had better quarrel and part.

"I am not sure you could have any worse fault," she slowly returned. "If you aren't true to yourself, Jack, you can't be true to anybody else. All I ask is that you will turn over a new leaf, promise me to be a clerk who is dead eager to get ahead in his own line and to save his money, instead of a bogus edition of a high-rolling sophomore. Forget the ball games at the Yale field and this nonsense of betting on the boat race. Oh, don't be a copy cat! It will never get you anywhere."

"So this is what you hand me, is it, because I have tried to behave like a gentleman?" he muttered haughtily. "Perhaps you like the style of those young roughnecks down in your neighborhood."

Jennie's black eyes flashed and her lips tightened, but she fought down her resentment and tried to be patient.

"You are not talking like a gentleman, Jack. Oh, that is the whole trouble! All you see in the college is the foolish, worthless side of it. You have done nothing but skim off the froth. I can find so much finer things in Yale, even by just looking at the buildings. Why, every time I pass the library I wish I had more leisure to read and study things."

The vanity of John Wesley Rand had been sorely wounded; likewise, the veneer had been damaged in spots. Beneath it was the raw streak which prompted him to commit an unpardonable offense. Self-love was stronger than his feeling of affection for pretty Jennie Robinson, and he muttered, with a sneer:

"You ought to be fairly well acquainted with Yale yourself. You thought I was a student that night I first spoke to you on Chapel Street, and I guess I wasn't the only one. I didn't notice that you got huffy and slapped my face, or anything like that."

Jennie was so cruelly hurt that a tear glistened on her cheek. Her voice quivered with intensity as she said:

"I—I couldn't help liking you when I saw you in the door of your store, and it didn't seem very dreadful to talk to each other, when there was nobody to introduce you. As for being free and flirty with other fellows, I never, never did. And I ought not to have to tell you so."

She hesitated, perhaps awaiting an apology, a plea for forgiveness, but the sulky John Wesley glowered at the floor of the car and fumbled with his bamboo stick. Jennie looked at him, raised her head with an air of decision, and signaled the conductor that she wished to get off. Without another glance at her companion, she stepped to the roadside, and the trolley rattled on toward the beach. John Wesley Rand still sat as she had left him, filled with a sense of injury and injustice. The girl had the temper of a hornet, and it was mighty lucky he found it out before he married her. She couldn't appreciate him, by Jove, and he ought to have known better.

Possibly Jennie's influence had been stronger to guard him against his own weaknesses than he was at all aware.

At any rate, it was not many months after he lost her when he began to frequent one or two cafés which were popular among the more convivial undergraduates. Occasionally he was good-naturedly invited to join a party at one of the round tables where there was beer and chorus singing. A few steins loosened the tongue of John Wesley Rand, and his loquacity rather bored the others, for which reason he was gradually and politely dropped. He sat alone after that, listening, or eying some prominent senior in the hope that he might beckon him across the room.

Sociability was his excuse for drinking, but he had not the stamina to hold a temptation with a firm rein. He had ceased to live in his mother's house. It was a stupid hole and she nagged him and prayed over him and had weeping spells that made him uncomfortable. The climax came when, as a devout Methodist, she dragged him to a series of revival meetings, and publicly referred to him as in need of saving grace. He told her what he thought of the performance, and found a room in another student lodging house some distance away, so that he would be unlikely to encounter her.

There was no one to guide and restrain him. He had dropped his high-school friends because he felt himself above them, and the Yale men whom he aped felt no concern for his welfare. He was not of their world. John Wesley was sliding on a toboggan, and one day the bump came. A late and sportive night had fuddled his wits, and his pockets were empty. He borrowed a few dollars, intending to replace them in making sales, and his attempt to cover up the transaction was so clumsy that he was easily detected by the junior partner of Wallace, Hamm & Co. Nothing was said to the police, but John Wesley was hustled into the street so hastily that his carefully pressed clothes were mussed.

He was unable to find another position in New Haven, for he loathed the idea of hard work for daily wages. For a while he hung about the campus, and was able to borrow small amounts from careless undergraduates who hearkened to his tale of misfortune undeserved. This source of revenue soon failed, for the truth became known and the rumor spread that young Jack Rand was "all to the bad, a genteel bum." It was a bitter dose when one of the vigilant "campus cops" warned him to keep away from the dormitories as an undesirable character.

Shortly thereafter he disappeared from New Haven, and came to the surface in Philadelphia. He was still well dressed—this was his chief asset—and in speech and manner he was a typical youth from Yale. Stress of circumstances drove him to throw overboard such scruples as were left; and, as an experiment, he essayed the rôle of a full-fledged impostor. His heart thumped like a coward's, but the adventure proved absurdly easy.

Selecting the name of a prominent lawyer whom he knew to be a Yale alumnus, he strolled into his offices, outwardly jaunty, and sent in a card upon which he had written in pencil: "Yale, 1916." The lawyer invited him to his desk, and the greeting was affable. Mr. John Wesley Rand was ready with a glib story of a hurried trip home from college and a pocketbook stolen or mislaid in a sleeping car. He had left the train at Philadelphia on the chance of finding some one willing to lend him a small amount. He made a favorable impression, and the lawyer's shrewd questions found him armed at every point. His knowledge of the campus was intimately familiar, and at his tongue's end was the latest gossip of college men and events. The lawyer's nephew was in the junior class. John Wesley knew him and was able to describe his activities, to tell

what fraternity he had joined, and so on.

It was plausible, convincing, and with a chuckle the lawyer laid twenty dollars on the desk and advised the young man to be more careful in future. As the bogus undergraduate sought the street, he said to himself:

"A wise gink, that, but it was no trouble at all to trim him. He isn't liable to look me up in a college catalogue. He would have to send to New Haven for one, and he wasn't stung for enough to make a fuss over it."

It occurred to John Wesley to harvest this ripe field of Philadelphia before moving on. During the same day he presented himself to a wholesale merchant, a newspaper proprietor, and a city official, stanch Yale men, and they accepted him for what he pretended to be. That night he departed westward with booty amounting to seventy dollars. Pittsburgh was his destination, and he encountered no trouble until a canny young steel man observed:

"Why not telegraph your folks for cash? A rush wire will get money through to-day, and you can take a night train. Meanwhile, I'll phone one of the hotels to take care of you."

A new hand at the game, John Wesley flushed and cast an uneasy glance at the door as he replied, not quite so glibly:

"My father and mother left Denver last week for a trip to the coast. I don't know where to reach them in a hurry."

"Wire some friend of theirs," suggested the other, "or shoot a call to one of your crowd in New Haven."

"Er—thank you; I wonder why I didn't think of that," said John Wesley, as he backed out of the room, nor tarried to chat of dear old Yale.

This episode shook his nerve, for there had been suspicion in the demeanor of the steel man. Concluding that the climate of Pittsburgh might disagree with him, the adventurer wandered into Ohio. He was fast learning to live by his wits, and his distaste for honest employment was stronger than ever. Practice made him more perfect in his rôle, and his sense of decency was so blunted that he failed to comprehend the infamy of trading upon the fraternal, unselfish loyalty existing among men who had lived the best years of their youth beneath the elms of Yale.

John Wesley Rand committed a grave blunder when he included in his list of prospective victims the name of one Willis J. Colton, of Cleveland. This energetic person was the secretary of the Yale Alumni Association of the Middle Western States, and some word had reached him concerning John Wesley's operations elsewhere. Ignorant of the fact that he had attracted this unwelcome attention, the impostor introduced himself to Mr. Willis J. Colton, who listened to his story with inscrutable gravity and then offered John Wesley a letter to read. It was from New Haven, written by a resident alumnus, and had this to say:

DEAR WILLIS: Regarding your inquiry, I can tell you who the lad is. He appears to be using his real name. He was never connected with the college as a student. His mother lets rooms on High Street. You may remember her. We used to call her "Ma" Rand, and she was something of a tartar. The boy saw too much of the sporty side of the campus. Wallace, Hamm & Co. fired him for touching the till. If he looks you up, throw a scare into him, but don't chuck him into jail, for the sake of the poor old widow. So he has organized a sucker list out in your neck of the woods! My, my, but the laugh is on the bright and bustling West. Yours as ever. BILL.

John Wesley scanned no more than three lines of this distressing document. It was enough and to spare. Diving for his hat, he sprinted for the hall and scuttled down the stairs without waiting for the elevator. Still in

full flight, he dashed for a railroad station and was whisked away in a train which happened to be bound East. It was time he concocted some new scheme. Like many weaklings, he had a streak of sentimentality, and the reference to his mother made him tearful. He would try to find a job so she need not be ashamed of him.

This laudable impulse flickered out a few days later, when he had wasted his money and found himself on the ragged edge. The fear that Willis J. Colton, of Cleveland, might be on his trail was a waking nightmare, and he decided to seek a region where Yale alumni were few and far between, to get under cover and make himself difficult to find. He therefore made his way to Boston, avoiding New Haven, and for two days honestly tried to find a clerkship of some kind. Unable to give any references, the quest was futile, and he sat in a shabby bedroom on a mean street, forlornly wondering what would become of him.

In this plight, the temptation to play the impostor once more was stronger than he could resist. It seemed impossible that his reputation could have preceded him into farther New England. The dread of starvation made him reckless. He would not try the game in Boston, but in some smaller town. In his suit case was a fat, paper-bound volume, the directory of living Yale graduates. It was with this that he had compiled his lists of victims. He now skimmed through the pages under the heading of Massachusetts. His attention was caught by a name, Henry Barbour, recorded as living in Hillsdale, and he said to himself:

"Here's luck! That's a friend of mine, Harry Barbour, who graduated four years ago. He roomed at our house when he was a freshman. His family owns a bunch of cotton mills or something, but he put on no airs at all. He was mighty good to me. I'll go to him on the level, tell him I'm down and out, and I bet he loosens up for old times' sake."

John Wesley was genuinely happy. He would not have to masquerade and renew the risk and danger. Perhaps the plutocratic Barbour might offer to stake him to a clean, easy job. He was a big-hearted chap, who had more than once advanced money to John Wesley's mother when the other lodgers were behind with their payments. A three-hour journey by rail, and the impecunious pilgrim reached Hillsdale. It was a country town in a farming region, and vainly he searched the landscape for the tall chimneys and long buildings of the Barbour Mills. In the main street he found a small brick hotel where he asked for information.

"Mr. Henry Barbour?" echoed the elderly landlord. "The first house beyond the church, right-hand side. You can see the steeple from here."

"Thank you. And where are the big mills?"

"I dunno of any big mills nearer than Newboro, and that's twenty miles from here. Travelin' salesman, are you?"

Somewhat puzzled, John Wesley nodded and moved in the direction of the white church which gleamed among ancient trees. Soon he descried the dwelling just beyond it, a square, colonial house of no imposing dimensions set behind a picket fence. It failed to suggest, in the remotest degree, the estate of a lordly manufacturer. It was such a modest, comfortable home as could be found in any New England village. John Wesley swiftly reflected that the simple life might be a fad of Harry Barbour's. Perhaps he spent part of the year in Hillsdale to get away from the pomp and glitter of his normal surroundings. A rich man could afford to do queer stunts. John Wesley could not quite remember whether

the address had been Hillsdale during Barbour's college course.

Into the dooryard walked the visitor and banged a summons on the brass knocker. Presently a staircase creaked, there was a heavy tread in the hall, and, instead of a servant, John Wesley was confronted by a rather stout, rosy young man who wore glasses. This was not the man he had come to find. At length the visitor broke the awkward silence by exclaiming:

"I must have made a mistake. The hotel keeper steered me wrong. I am looking for Harry Barbour, a Yale man who is an old friend of mine."

The rosy gentleman in the doorway beamed cordially and replied, with a laugh:

"My name is Henry Barbour, and I went to Yale. There were two of us of the same name. We are distant cousins. Your friend was called Harry, and I was known as 'Pudge' Barbour. Are you in college at New Haven? Won't you come in?"

John Wesley's mind was working rapidly. Here was a man whom he could not recollect having seen on the campus, and apparently the wrong Henry Barbour had failed to recognize him. A shift of tactics seemed advisable. He had gambled his last dollar on the trip to Hillsdale. This country jay of a Yale man seemed like a soft mark. Why not try the same old game on him? It looked perfectly safe. With just the proper touch of boyish embarrassment, the engaging stranger said:

"Yes, I am in my sophomore year. Rand is my name. I got a couple of days' leave of absence and came to Boston to see an awfully nice girl before she went away for the summer. I had a bit of hard luck and thought of Harry Barbour. I knew him before I entered college."

He had entered the hall while he spoke, and Henry Barbour was urging him with a hand on his arm.

"We must sit down in my study for a chat," cried the latter. "Yale men seldom run across each other in this quiet corner of Massachusetts. I am in the enemy's country. The map is mostly Harvard crimson."

They went upstairs, and John Wesley Rand was ushered into a large room, rather disorderly, whose walls were lined with shelves of books. The desk was strewn with papers, and the host continued:

"This is my day to block out the next Sunday's sermon, and the effort usually makes the place look as if a cyclone had hit it. No, you are not interrupting, my dear boy. Now do tell me what is really wrong with the football situation. Too many coaches? Loss of the old bulldog spirit? What do the undergraduates think about it?"

John Wesley reflected a moment, trying to get his bearings. This Henry Barbour was too clumsily built to have been an athlete, and he could have attained no social prominence. One of the mob of nobodies, probably, who waited on table or took care of furnaces to help pay expenses, or thought a lot of high marks in scholarship. With the air of one who knew, John Wesley replied with inside information about football, the crew, the fraternities, compulsory chapel, and the spirit of the campus. Henry Barbour listened eagerly, but looked contrite and broke in to say:

"You must pardon me for the oversight, but you mentioned hard luck. If I can be of any service, please don't hesitate to say so. I presume you are anxious to return to New Haven, but you must at least stay to supper with us. Mrs. Barbour will be delighted."

"It's very kind of you," returned John Wesley, with a grateful smile, "but I really ought to take the midnight train out of Boston. The dean's

office is pretty strict these days, and I'm due for the first recitation to-morrow. Of course, I expected to find Harry Barbour in Hillsdale, and—and——"

The country clergyman appeared amused as the sophomore hesitated. It was so obviously a financial difficulty, characteristic of rattle-pated youth.

"And so you unexpectedly went broke," he pleasantly suggested, "and it's a long walk to the campus."

"I lost my pocketbook somehow, Mr. Barbour. Silly of me! I'm in hock at the hotel, I suppose, until my bill is paid. I can send for money and wait over in Boston."

"And be marked for unexcused absence? That won't do at all. You had better let me help you out of the little scrape. Will twenty-five be enough, do you think?"

"Plenty, thank you, but you must think I have my nerve with me. I feel awkward about taking it, but you understand how I happened to drift in on you, and——"

"No more apologies. It was an enjoyable mistake, Rand, from my point of view. If you will wait until I can run down street and—er—get a check cashed—it will take only a few minutes. Mrs. Barbour happens to be out, but you must tell her who you are if she comes in while I am gone."

Left alone in the minister's study, John Wesley stared idly at the bookshelves and smoked a cigarette, wondering how soon he could catch a train to Boston and so bid farewell to Hillsdale. A quarter of an hour passed, and he was conscious of a slight uneasiness. There had seemed no chance of a slip, but perhaps the minister was not so simple as he looked. John Wesley walked to a window and gazed in the direction of the stores and hotel as a young woman turned into the yard. A tree partly screened his view of her. It was probably Mrs. Barbour, and he would prefer entertaining her to being left alone with his uncomfortable fears. He heard her ascend the stairs with a quick, light footfall, as though she came in haste. When she appeared in the study doorway, his deferential smile gave place to an expression of blank, frightened amazement. Jennie Robinson confronted him, slender and graceful, her girlish prettiness enriched by an aspect of matured dignity that was singularly becoming. Scorn was in her eyes, indignation flamed upon her cheek. It cost him an effort to falter:

"Hello, Jen! What's the answer? How did you happen to wander so far from home?"

"I am Mrs. Henry Barbour," she replied, and a proud, sweet gladness shone through her cloudy wrath. "The same old counterfeit, aren't you, Jack, only worse?"

"What makes you think I am so rotten?" he muttered, unable to rally. "Giving me a call-down on general principles? That's just like a girl."

The minister's wife closed the door and moved nearer John Wesley Rand, standing where she could intercept a retreat. With a commanding gesture, she bade him be still and explained, passionately vehement:

"I met my husband at the grocer's a few minutes ago. He was trying to borrow some money, and I asked him what it was for. He told me, of course, and he seemed so happy to be doing a favor for another Yale man that I had nothing to say. He did not mention your name, and I never dreamed—until I came up to the study to find you——"

"Some little surprise party for both of us?" the derelict broke in. "He trotted out to cash a check, so he said."

"It was a harmless fib to save your feelings," she returned. "We have no bank account as yet. It is a kind-hearted parish, and they think the world of my husband, but the salary is small and it isn't paid very promptly and we sometimes run behind. The grocer

didn't have the cash on hand, and Mr. Barbour went to find one of the deacons. I left him and came home. Borrowing money to help a Yale sophomore get back to New Haven! And it turns out to be worthless 'Jack' Rand! I suppose there is nothing you can say for yourself, is there?"

Cornered and sullen, John Wesley realized that this was far and away the shabbiest episode of his career. A sense of contrast, tragic and vivid, could not help presenting itself. He blustered:

"I need the money. I've got to have it. You used to like me, Jennie. Why can't you stay downstairs when the minister comes back? I don't intend to linger for supper. I'll find some excuse to beat it. You are not anxious to let him know that I'm an old pal of yours, are you?"

"Listen to me, Jack," she said, in quieter tones. It was an appeal instead of a denunciation. "This is Henry Barbour's first parish. He went back to New Haven for a course in the theological school. There was a little mission church in our part of town, where my brothers and sisters went to Sunday school. I met him there, and he persuaded me to teach a class. Everything was different after that. I was terribly anxious to read and learn. It was the feeling, only ever so much stronger, that I used to have when I walked past the Yale library. And he helped and advised me, and finally he asked me to marry him. I refused, for I couldn't see myself at all as a minister's wife; but he persuaded me to change my mind. I stumble along, doing my best, and people seem to like me, and I am absolutely happy and satisfied. Could I say as much if I had married you, Jack?"

"You never gave me a chance," he protested half-heartedly. "You flared up that day in the trolley, and it was all over. I guess I began to go bad after that."

Her patience broke its bonds and she punished him with words that cut like whips:

"Jack Rand is so mean and low that he is ready to steal twenty-five dollars from a country clergyman. And this is the boy who was so fond of pretending that he was a Yale man and a gentleman. Honestly, if any one else had told me such a thing of you, I couldn't have believed it. Why, not so very long ago you thought you loved me. You said so, anyhow. Oh, I can see how you happened to come to Hillsdale. It was a mistake. You were trying to find the rich Harry Barbour, of Wolverton. When you discovered the blunder, you didn't have the decency to go away. This sort of swindling must be a habit, you do it so cleverly. Have you tried to cheat your mother out of her savings with some other story as plausible as this? I presume so."

The youthful adventurer, who was not so wicked as weak, flinched from this bitter arraignment. To behold himself as Jennie saw him was an experience that shocked his dormant sensibilities. He was aware that he still regarded her opinion of him as important. She had returned from a bright and vanished dream.

"Yes, I did get into the wrong town to-day," said he, avoiding her gaze, "but I was on the level in looking for Harry Barbour. I got sore on the game and had an idea of asking him for a job. No, I wasn't so much a repentant sinner as a man who was afraid to be crooked any longer. That's the truth, Jennie. I'm sick of bluffing. You played in luck when you found me out in time. It's a whole lot easier for a fellow like me to skid than for him to straighten out again. Until I ran into you, there hasn't been one single, solitary friend who cared a whoop, cared enough to roast me. I begin to think I don't need that twenty-five dollars."

"I really do believe you are almost

ashamed of yourself, Jack Rand," cried the girl, but there was no mercy in her face as she added: "Yes, you *will* take the money, the money that my husband went out to borrow, and I hope that every dollar will torment you until you are able to repay it out of wages earned by hard work."

"I don't want it, I tell you!" declared the young man, with increasing earnestness. "I'm not going to wait for it. You can tell him that I changed my mind."

She glanced at a window and saw Henry Barbour cross the street. He entered briskly, pounded up the stairs, and flung open the door. Unaware that the tableau held any significance, he exclaimed:

"Did you think I was never coming back, Rand? I told Mrs. Barbour I might be delayed."

He flourished a sheaf of small bills and pressed them into the hand of the "Yale sophomore," who wore a helpless air as he stammered:

"I—I'm sorry to have put you to all this trouble, but—but I'd rather not. I can fix things up somehow."

'But I insist," was the jovial insistence. "Please don't call it a bother. You can't afford to risk losing a New Haven connection and get in wrong with the dean's office. That would never do."

Before the sheepish John Wesley could protest again, the minister's wife took command of the situation. Wise was her method of retribution, harsh the penalty as she gravely announced:

"Mr. Rand and I are old friends, Henry. I used to hear a great deal about Yale from him. He will accept this money as a loan from *me*. He must accept it. The suggestion may sound odd to you, but I will explain it later when I tell you what I know of Mr. Rand."

"Borrow it from *you?*" faltered John Wesley, and his handsome features reflected unusual emotion. Henry Barbour looked at them, his kindly eyes perplexed but his confidence unshaken.

"Yes, from me," replied Jennie inflexibly. "In honor bound, Jack, to return it. Is it a promise?"

As the flint strikes fire, so in the battered young heart of John Wesley a spark of manhood was kindled. Impetuously he burst out:

"That's enough! You bet I'll send it back to you, Jennie, if I had to sweat with a pick and shovel. But I won't touch a cent of it. I can't! It's all right, though. You win, just the same. I couldn't have it put up to me any harder in a thousand years. You don't have to tell your husband about me. I guess I can let him have the truth right now that I'm a liar and a grafter."

Henry Barbour was no longer perplexed. He was learning to read the souls of men who groped and stumbled on life's hard road. He comprehended why his wife should have chosen to direct this affair. It was not for him to interfere. Detaining John Wesley, he said to him:

"She has faith in you as an old friend. That should mean a great deal to you. Now will you let us help you, not as between Yale men, but as fellow men?"

"How far is it to Wolverton, where Harry Barbour lives?" demanded John Wesley, by way of reply.

"Thirty-five miles by road."

"I'll walk it. No, thank you, not even the price of a railroad ticket from you."

"Please write Harry Barbour," said Jennie to her husband, "and tell him that I am willing to recommend Mr. Rand as a young man who is anxious to make good."

"That puts it up to me harder than ever," said John Wesley, with an uncertain smile. "There is no way to beat your game. I surely am in honor bound."

# The Blue Rose

By John R. Coryell

*Author of "The Hound of Marat," Etc.*

(*In Four Parts—Part Four*)

## CHAPTER XVIII.

YOU heard what was said?" gasped Bruce Henderson. Of all the people in the world, his daughter Margery was the one he most wished to remain in ignorance of his past.

"I heard everything," she said. "I heard you admit that you stole the Blue Rose—the diamond you made me wear at my ball."

She was hardly reproachful; her manner was one of deep depression. Her father winced as he heard the low voice and looked into the great blue eyes. Stein looked wistfully at the broken girl.

She went close up to her father and took him by the lapels of his coat. One usually associates such an act with tenderness. It was plain, in Margery's case, that she did it to support herself.

"Papa," she said, staring up into his face, "look me in the eyes and assure me that you told the truth when you said you did not kill his father."

Stein leaned toward them eagerly, as if to catch every word. Bruce Henderson took Margery by the shoulders and looked hungrily into her eyes. "Margery," he said, with passionate earnestness, "I did not kill Rudolph Stein. I never killed any man. I swear it."

She turned with piteous pleading to Stein. "He did not kill your father; I know he didn't. Won't you believe it?"

He went around the desk to her and put his arm about her. "Yes, dear," he said tenderly, "I believe it."

Bruce Henderson stared, but remained speechless. It seemed to him that there was nothing for him to do but let this young man despoil him utterly of everything he cherished. He wondered why he didn't leap on him and take him by the throat; why, at the very least, he didn't roar out a terrible threat at Margery. The automatic in his pocket seemed to call mocking attention to itself by its weight.

"And," Margery went on, in the same pleading tone, "no matter what else he did that was wrong to you, you will forgive?"

"Yes, dear."

"And you will let the feud die now? You won't pursue him any more? You will give up your hatred of him? Give it up utterly?"

"Yes, dear. Don't be so troubled, Margery. Everything will come right now. I believe what your father says."

"And you, papa; you will believe he is not a thief?" She looked at her father as she spoke, and when she uttered the last word she seemed to remember that it applied to him even if not to her lover, and she shrank nearer to the latter.

Bruce Henderson noted the action of

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his child, and it cut deep into his soul. He had never regretted or been ashamed of any of his ruthless deeds, but it seemed now as if he understood for the first time. He groaned, but was otherwise silent.

"Papa," Margery said, speaking firmly now and facing her father, "I know Rudolph did not steal the jewels. And you and he must not be enemies. He has said he forgives you and ends his feud with you. You are my father; he is my lover, the man I shall marry. You two must not hate each other."

"You are going to marry him, Margery?" Bruce Henderson asked. It did not seem to occur to him to forbid her doing so. He knew he had lost the power to interfere now.

"Yes, papa, I am going to marry him. I love him. I know what your objections are, but they are nothing to me. I love him; he loves me."

"Do you ask me to take his hand and be his friend?" demanded Bruce Henderson, in a dull rage.

"I ask you to believe he did not steal the necklace because I know he did not do it. Can you not be as big as he is and forgive any injury he has done you?"

"Do you know what he has done?" cried the goaded man. "He has this very day led my enemies and taken ten millions from me; he has sat at my desk, smiling, and at the same time plotting against me; he has betrayed me to Lord Wembry, from whose mines the Blue Rose was taken; he has stolen you from me. Isn't that enough? He has told you that your father is one to turn from."

"Never! He has never told me anything excepting that you wronged him and that he has been pursuing you."

"But he has brought it about. It is the same thing. I am a father degraded, a financier discredited, a man beaten. And all through him. And you ask me to forgive him."

"If you care at all for me, you will forgive him. He is not your enemy any longer; why should you be his?"

"Mr. Henderson," said Stein quickly, "I hear sounds outside that indicate that your men are coming here. No doubt they have Oishi prisoner. I did not take the Blue Rose, and I know Oishi did not. Be advised by me, whether you forgive me or not. Send these officers about their business, or worse will happen to you. We were expecting to be arrested, and it was to be a beginning of your complete exposure. Do you want the whole world to know that you began your career as a thief? I speak plainly because you must act quickly."

There was something so dynamic in the sharp, forceful words of the young man, something so compelling in his manner, that Bruce Henderson gave way completely and gasped: "What shall I do?"

"Will you leave the whole affair in my hands?"

"Yes. Do what you please."

"Sit down!" He gently but swiftly pushed Margery into a chair, waved his hand at another for her father, and sat down himself. "Now act as if we were good friends. I will do the talking."

There was a knock at the door, which was then pushed open without further ceremony. Schoeffel, followed by Beeston with Oishi handcuffed, entered the room. Four of Beeston's men remained outside. The local chief of police thrust the men aside and also entered the room with all the importance and authority of the man who held the warrant of arrest.

"There is the man," said Schoeffel, pointing at Stein, though taken aback to see those three sitting there in apparently amicable relations.

"Have you a warrant for me, too?" asked Stein, with an easy smile and without getting up. "By the way, Bee-

ston, open the door and let Miss Darwin in. I saw her out there. Not very considerate of you, Schoeffel, to leave her outside after she's done so much for you. Open the door, Beeston!"

Beeston stared stupidly at Schoeffel, then at Bruce Henderson. The latter nodded his head, and Beeston opened the door and said: "Are you there, Miss Darwin? Oh, yes! Come in!"

Schoeffel stared uneasily from Henderson to Stein. The chief of police gasped. Miss Darwin entered in the midst of silence.

"Sit here, Miss Darwin," said Stein, smiling pleasantly at her. "I told Schoeffel it was a shame to leave you out there when you had done so much for him. Besides, it will help you later, when you make a profession of detecting crime, to know just how Schoeffel has done this."

Miss Darwin looked around uncomfortably. Margery gave no sign of welcome, but looked with cold reproach at the girl who had broken her promise. Stein smilingly pushed the chair toward her, and she sat down.

"Now, Mr. Schoeffel!" said Stein, his manner suddenly becoming almost menacing. "Have you found the necklace?"

Schoeffel was quick to see that some composition had been made between Stein and Henderson; also he was quick to see that, having found nothing, and having no support from Henderson, he would not dare to go on as he had contemplated.

"What does this mean, Mr. Henderson?" he demanded.

"Permit me, Mr. Henderson!" interposed Stein. "Do I speak for you in this matter?"

"Yes," responded Henderson hoarsely.

"It means, Mr. Schoeffel," said Stein, "that for some time past it has been a part of my pleasure and amusement to see you make a fool of yourself Neither Oishi nor I have had anything to do with stealing the necklace. In fact, the necklace wasn't stolen; it was merely mislaid. Is it not so, Miss Henderson? The necklace is yours. Do you know where it is?"

"Yes," she answered, in a low tone, to the utter astonishment of everybody but Stein and Oishi.

"And there has been no crime committed?"

"None."

"I'm sorry you have been put to such inconvenience, chief," Stein said, "but all the facts were not known until within a few minutes. I am Mr. Henderson's confidential secretary, and, so far from being suspected by him, am closer to him than ever. Kindly release your prisoner, Beeston. You may go, Oishi, with our apologies for Mr. Schoeffel's ridiculous arrest of you."

Beeston looked at Henderson, and, receiving another short nod from him, unlocked the handcuffs from the wrists of the ever-impassive Oishi. Oishi, at a glance from Stein, left the room.

"Beeston," said Stein, "take the chief to the smoking room and see that he is compensated for all the trouble he has been put to. I hope you will not remember this against us, chief; the fault was really not ours. Miss Darwin"—and he turned to the governess, who was now quivering with shame—"the entertainment is about over. I think your chief"—indicating Schoeffel, who, with red face and glaring eyes, stood stiff and uncompromising—"will want to make a few bitter remarks to Mr. Henderson which will not be for your ears."

Beeston led the chief of police out, almost supporting him, so convulsed was he with mirth over the discomfiture of the scientific detective. Miss Darwin, however, turned to Margery as she rose from her chair.

"Oh, Miss Margery! Forgive me for what I have done; it was all for

your sake. I was misled by that foolish old man."

Stein smiled and looked at Schoeffel, who, however, looked as if he had neither seen nor heard anything.

"You gave me your promise, Miss Darwin, and you broke it," answered Margery coldly.

"Forgive her, dear," Stein said, in a low tone. "She really thought she was right, and she has done me a genuine service. Please forgive her."

"I forgive you, Miss Darwin, but I am grieved."

"Thank you," said the governess humbly, and left the room.

There now remained Margery, her father, Stein, and Schoeffel. The latter seemed to be waiting for something before speaking. Stein divined it. "Break out, Schoeffel!" he laughed. "You can't say anything Miss Henderson doesn't know; and I assure you I am well posted, too."

Schoeffel turned his eyes on Stein and studied him for a moment. "You are very clever, Mr. Stone."

"Stein, please."

"I take off my hat to you, metaphorically speaking. You have played your hand well; you have carried everything before you, and you have beaten me."

"Praise from you is precious, but I mustn't let you deceive yourself. It has all been very easy, pleasantly easy, I may say, particularly what you call beating you."

"But," Schoeffel said, going on as if Stein's words had made no impression on him, and addressing himself to Bruce Henderson, "if I have been worsted by Mr. Stein, I have yet to settle with my employer. Are you sure, Mr. Henderson, that you wish your daughter to hear what I have to say to you?"

"Say anything you like, you fool!" snapped the man who had had to sit silent while his secretary had disposed of everything. "She knows where the Blue Rose came from, and all about it."

"She knows you stole it from the mine in which Lord Wembry is interested?"

"Tut, tut!" interposed Stein, giving Margery a glance of reassurance. "She knows all you know and much more. And Lord Wembry knows, too. I know you expect to extort money from Mr. Henderson with what you know, but you can't do it."

Schoeffel looked from one to the other, his face white now with rage. "I will give the whole story to the papers."

"And they will publish it at once, of course. They won't go first to Mr. Henderson to hear what he has to say, or to me to hear what I have to say, or to Oishi. Mr. Schoeffel"—and his manner was distinctly hard and threatening—"don't make the mistake of entering a contest with me. And it will be with me if you do it. I am too strong for you. Your own story is one that can be printed, and it will be if you say a word or lift a finger against the peace of any one here. Now you may go."

Schoeffel glared into the eyes of the young man for a moment, then turned and walked slowly out of the room.

Bruce Henderson had watched Stein throughout with the grim intentness of a man who sees his recent conqueror handle another antagonist with ease; and he gave him a real, if grudging, admiration. He saw in him one who was equally strong and subtle, and, as subtlety was a quality he had always lacked, he admired it the more.

"Suppose he should give the story to the papers?" Margery cried.

"He wouldn't dare," Stein assured her.

"I always said you were efficient, Stone. Which is it, by the way, Stone or Stein?" It was Henderson's way of making his peace with the other.

"I prefer Stone because it is American; but if Margery prefers the other, it shall be so," he answered lightly, though the tender look in his eyes belied his tone.

"Anything to forget the hideous past," she said piteously.

"It is forgotten, dear," he said. "Your father and I are friends."

She looked at her father. He nodded his head in acquiescence. "But that doesn't include Oishi, I hope."

Stone laughed. "Oishi wouldn't stay now. Am I discharged, too?"

Bruce Henderson laughed grimly. "After this day's work, you'll be looking for a secretary yourself, I guess. But, say! You spoke just now of the Blue Rose as having only been mislaid. Was that a bluff?"

Stone and Margery instantly looked at each other. The expression in his eyes was questioning; in hers it was alarm.

"I know about it, Margery," he said gently, "and I think your father ought to know."

"It wasn't a bluff, then?" Henderson cried eagerly. "You know where the necklace is?"

"Remember, papa," Margery said, her face pale, "the necklace is mine. You gave it to me."

"Did you take it? Pshaw! How could you?"

"You agree that it is mine to dispose of as I please?" she demanded.

Bruce Henderson stiffened at that. He had given it to her, but it was preposterous that he should agree to let her do with it anything her whim suggested. But he caught Stone's eye and saw that he must agree to what Margery wished.

"Very well," he said reluctantly.

"And you won't make a fuss? You will be guided by my wishes?"

Again, in response to a sign from Stone, he said yes. Margery drew a long breath. "I don't know how you know, Rudolph, but I suppose you do, since you seem to know everything."

"Shall I tell you who took it?" he asked.

She nodded her head. She was glad to let him take the affair out of her hands, for, in spite of her father's agreement, she expected a storm.

"Your mother took it."

"Yes."

Bruce Henderson started and clenched his fists. He had forgotten there was such a person as Mrs. Henderson; he wanted to forget her. In these days, he had put her so far in the background of his thought that it was like bringing the dead to life. And rage instantly seized him.

"She took it?" he roared, quite in the old manner.

"Don't forget your promise, Mr. Henderson," Stone said quietly.

"She took it?" repeated Henderson, staring. "How?"

"I don't know," Margery answered.

"I don't know how she did it," Stein said, "but I suspected her from the first. When I found it wasn't in the safe ——"

"You?" cried Margery and her father in a breath, only Margery's was a cry of pain and reproach.

"Don't feel that way about it," he said quickly. "You must remember I looked on the Blue Rose as stolen property."

"How did you learn the combination?" demanded Bruce Henderson.

"By working at it when I was alone in the library. That was very little to do."

"Did Oishi drug the men?" Margery asked.

"Yes. That was easy, too."

"Oishi!" cried Bruce Henderson. "I had forgotten him for the moment. I won't have him around another hour." He went to an electric button to call a servant.

"One moment!" interposed Stein

quickly. "You say he was in Mrs. Henderson's room last night. He did not tell me, which is suspicious. Can you find out, Margery, whether or not the necklace is in its place? I would like to know before Oishi goes."

"If mamma is not in her room, I can look." Margery went out, leaving the two men alone together.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"Does Margery think I'm going to let her mother have that necklace?"

Stein looked at him with an odd expression in his dark eyes. "You still talk of the necklace as if it were yours to give or keep."

"But I gave it to Margery."

"Have you had the Blue Rose so long that you actually think it is yours? It never was yours."

Bruce Henderson shrugged his shoulders. "You have no kick, Stein; it looks to me as if you'd got Margery whatever I say."

"Do you know Margery so little that you think she will have the Blue Rose? As soon as it can be beguiled from Mrs. Henderson we will give the Blue Rose to Lord Wembry for the stockholders in the mines."

"Give it back?" gasped Henderson, aghast.

"Good Lord! What do you want with it? Anyhow, it's Margery's by your gift, and she will insist on its going to Wembry. You might as well make up your mind to that. Give him back the Blue Rose and the value of the diamonds that were stolen. And tell Margery so before she speaks of it if you want to reinstate yourself with her. Can't you understand what a shock it is to her to think her father a thief? Of course, I'll contribute two-thirds of the value of the diamonds to square my father and Yung Wing."

"Oh, well!" snapped Henderson, "if you've made up your mind to it, I suppose it will have to be. But look here, Stein! There's a limit to what I'll stand from you."

Stein shook his head slowly. "I'm not going to ask you to stand anything from me, Mr. Henderson; but I will tell you this: if you are wise you will try to understand that for Margery's sake I want to be your friend. Your troubles are not over yet."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, much as you may have hated me or may hate me now, if it had not been for me you would have had much worse treatment than you have had. My associates are merciless."

"Isn't Oishi——"

"All? He and I are only a part of an association whose object it is to strip you of your wealth and degrade you in the eyes of the whole world. What has been done is only a beginning. If I hadn't loved Margery the affair of the Blue Rose wouldn't have ended in this way, but in the spreading broadcast of your part in its original theft, and of your murder of the men who helped you."

"I swear I didn't murder them," Henderson gasped. "You must believe that. What I told you was true."

"I believe you, Bruce Henderson," was the grim response. "Perhaps I believe because I wish to. At any rate, I shall know from the one person who was there whether you speak the truth or not."

"It is the truth," insisted Henderson. He realized more than ever by the tremor of fear that shook him at the thought of further hounding, how much his courage had been broken by the implacable pursuit of him.

"Yes," said Stein reflectively, "I am disposed to think it is, but my mother died believing you had traitorously murdered my father after corrupting him and making a thief of him; and she made me swear to avenge him."

Bruce Henderson shuddered. "Who says I murdered him?"

"Yung Wing's wife, who was outside the hut while you were all inside. She went inside after you left, and she says that both men were dying, and both swore you had killed and robbed them."

"The truth is as I told you, Stein. I have no proof, but I swear it." He went to Stein and put his hand on his arm. "Look here, Stein! I've had enough of this. I admit it's got my nerve, this being fought in the dark. I stole the diamonds and left the men to die; but they were mortally wounded, and I couldn't have done anything for them. It was a low-down trick, if you like, but I didn't care for them, nor they for me. I did as either of them would have done. The thing is, will you stand by me and call the rest of those people off?"

"I'll do my best. You ought to know I would for Margery's sake."

Bruce Henderson wiped the drops of perspiration from his brow. "You and I together, Stein, ought to win out against any combination. I've learned to have a lot of respect for you," he laughed.

"You can't help me in this. If you tell the truth, and as I say I believe you, then these people have been using me. It is between them and me." His eyes flamed and his jaws set. "There will be a settlement, but it won't be an easy one. They are cunning and powerful."

"We have money."

"So have they. It was their money I played with at first; and they have shared everything with me."

"And their leader?" Henderson asked.

"Well, in a sense, I was that. I understood American ways, understood Wall Street. I planned the slow, steady, sure undermining of your courage; I planned the inroads on your fortune, the thwarting of your plans; and I planned the theft of the Blue Rose. On the other hand, it was they who contrived my education so as to fit in as your secretary; they who prepared Oishi; they who subscribed the capital with which all should be done. I have seemed to be the leader, seemed to direct everything; but I begin to feel that I was tricked. Well, we shall see."

He looked dangerous as he stood there going over the affair. He was thinking aloud more than he was trying to tell Henderson. More than ever before, the older man realized the terrific force of the younger one. He wondered how he had ever dared give him orders. His own brute strength and crude, iron will seemed trifling in the face of the power, the keen intelligence, the subtlety of his whilom secretary.

"See here, Stein!" he said eagerly; "it's true enough you got my nerve, and that I am not the man I was; but I'm a fighter yet. I believe in you, and I'll enlist under you. Together we ought to win out."

Stein smiled faintly. "We'll win out," he said. "I'm annoyed because I was a tool when I thought I was the directing intelligence. And when I am annoyed my brain works. Leave it to me. If I need you I will let you know. Only watch out all the time, for they have devilish cunning, and they are not done yet. When I have seen Oishi I shall know more."

"Why not see him right away? Have him in here now."

"You don't know Oishi. He is very clever, Mr. Henderson. Wait till Margery comes and tells us about the necklace. You see they know I have fallen in love with Margery, and they don't trust me any more. That is why I knew nothing about the visit last night to Mrs. Henderson's room. You see we—Oishi and I—knew the next morning that she had taken the necklace. I wouldn't let him go in there and hunt for it; so he went without permission. Ah, here is

Margery! The necklace?" he demanded of her, as she closed the door behind her.

"It is there, quite safe."

"Then I will see Oishi at once."

She put her hand on his arm. "You will not go? There are so many things to talk about. Papa, you will ask him to stay?"

"It's all right, little girl," her father said. "He and I have talked it all over. He and I are going to be friends. You will be glad to know, too, that when the right time comes we are going to give Lord Wembry the Blue Rose and pay him for the other diamonds."

Margey's face lighted up, but it was at Rudolph Stein that she first smiled, as if she knew the decision was due to him. "I am so glad, papa! I couldn't have been happy any other way. And you and Rudolph have really agreed to be friends?"

Stein put his arm about her and drew her to him. "Your father and I are going to work together, dear."

"Really?" and she looked wonderingly at her father, as if finding it hard to believe he would yield his prejudices to such an extent.

"Yes, it's true," her father said, in response to her look. "I find him as wonderful as you do. He may have first place if he wants it. I have no doubt he will take it if I don't yield it;" and he laughed good-naturedly. "Anyhow, Rudolph and I have joined forces."

"I'm so glad," Margery murmured.

Stein left them and went to find Oishi. He expected to find him in his own room, and did. Oishi smiled sardonically when he saw Stein enter the room.

"You seemed to have the whip hand, Rudolph," he said. "What's the word now? I shall go, anyhow. I wouldn't stay here after I had been suspected of stealing."

"Why did you go into Mrs. Henderson's room last night, Yung?"

Yung Wing—he was named after his father—rose before answering. He had been sitting near the window, and rose very slowly, as if considering as he came to his feet.

"I was searching for the necklace," he answered, looking steadily at the other.

"I had told you not to."

Yung made no response whatever, but stood there impassive and silent. Stein studied him for a few moments, his own face as impassive as Yung's.

"I'm sorry, Yung," he said, in a level tone. "You and I have known each other many years, and this is our first difference. I suppose this is final, then?"

"You'd better see mother."

"Yes, I shall see your mother. It was by her orders?"

Again Yung made no answer, but looked at the other as if there was nothing to be said, as if he had no intention of answering.

"I thought so," said Stein. "And the reason?"

"You are in love with Miss Henderson."

"And they don't trust me. Very good! It would have been better if they had talked with me about it instead of setting you to spy on me. I am sorry you should have done it. I have always been frank with you, Yung; and I have never failed your mother and Li. Even loving Miss Henderson made no difference. I was right in refusing to let you hunt for the necklace. My plan was the better one, as you shall see. Tell your mother and Li that I shall be in the city to-morrow night and will go to them."

Yung turned away, as if intending to say nothing, but it seemed as if he could not do that. He turned back again. "I did not spy on you, Rudolph, though it is natural for you to think

so. I told of your being in love with Miss Henderson, and Li said a man in love thinks first of his sweetheart. Then I was ordered to get the necklace."

"Did you get it?"

"No. You know I didn't, don't you? Miss Henderson went to find out, didn't she? Well?"

Stein studied him carefully. "If I were not so hurt by what you have done, Yung," he said, "I would be able to see this thing more clearly. As it is, all I can say is that when they were so quick to distrust me it must have been because they first had treachery in their own hearts. Good-by, Yung!" He held out his hand. "You will tell them I shall go to see them?"

"Good-by!" He took the proffered hand and quietly squeezed it. "You will know enough to be on your guard, so I don't need to warn you."

"Yes, I can take care of myself."

"I will send for my things," Yung said, putting on his overcoat. "I can catch the five-ten. I'm sorry to have it turn out this way." He went to the door and stopped and looked back at Stein, who was watching him, as if trying to make out something that puzzled him. "You are ten times as clever as the rest of us," Yung said, as he paused at the door, "but you will find them more subtle and dangerous now than you have ever imagined. Be careful!"

"One moment, Yung! Did they tell you the truth?"

Yung's eyes for a brief instant betrayed his wonder at the question. "The truth!" he repeated evenly. "I don't know what you mean."

Stein smiled. "I believe that is the truth, Yung, though you would like me to doubt it. Be sure you tell your mother that I asked you that question. She will be the more ready for me when I see her."

"I will. Don't forget that while I will not swerve from my course, I am still and always your friend, Rudolph."

"Good! I am glad."

Stein stood in the room for a full minute after the other had gone. He was puzzled; something eluded him. "I like him so much," he muttered, "that it hurts me, and I can't think as I should." He shrugged his shoulders. "I have lived with him, played with him, saved his life twice, and still I don't know him. But there is something, and I will get it yet. There was triumph in his eyes, I am sure of it."

He went out and down the stairs slowly. When he reached the floor on which his room was, he turned aside and knocked at Miss Darwin's door. She opened it, her face swollen with crying.

"Don't be so disturbed, Miss Darwin," he said quickly. "I will make Margery understand why you broke your promise. To be sure," he added, smiling, "it is hard to understand why you should work so hard to save her from me."

"Oh, Mr. Stone!" she sobbed.

"Stein is the name, really, but it is to be Stone," he laughed. "There now! Don't worry any more. I do understand, and so shall Margery. You were quite right."

"If she only would," sobbed the governess.

"She will. Now tell me, please, about Oishi. You saw him coming out of Mrs. Henderson's room last night?"

"Yes."

"And he went immediately to my door and handed me something?"

"Yes."

"Did he have anything else he was carrying excepting what he handed to me? I mean anything you noticed."

"Nothing. I saw him come out of her room and go to yours and hand you something; and I was so sure it was the necklace that I suppose I didn't look for anything else."

"All right! Now do stop feeling bad

about helping Schoeffel and breaking your promise to Margery. I assure you you did the right thing, and I will make Margery see it. I suppose you know that Margery and I are engaged, and that Mr. Henderson approves?"

"No, sir!" she cried, in amaze. "Well, you are wonderful."

He laughed happily and went away. He liked the plucky, clever little governess and was glad to be of service to her.

He forgot her immediately, however, his mind reverting to Yung and the expression of triumph he had caught in his eye. What did it mean? His mind groped as he went down the stairway and toward the library.

Margery and her father had evidently been having a comforting talk while he was gone, for they were sitting close together, and Margery seemed more at peace.

"I got nothing out of Oishi," he said, "excepting the certainty that I was suspected of treachery because I was in love with you. That, of course, really means that they were afraid I would find out the truth. But there was something about—I have it! Margery," he demanded quickly, "can you get the necklace and let us see it for five minutes? It is very necessary."

"Mamma isn't there now. If we hurried perhaps——"

"Bring it into my room, Margery. What are you afraid of, Rudolph?"

"Wait until I see it. Hurry, Margery!"

They all went upstairs together. Margery went into her mother's apartments, the other two went into Bruce Henderson's.

In a few minutes Margery came running in, holding the necklace wrapped in a silk handkerchief. Rudolph almost snatched it from her and opened it. He looked closely for a moment, then handed it to Bruce Henderson, crying:

"I was afraid of it."

An oath broke from Henderson as he studied the jewels. "The Blue Rose is gone!" he roared.

## CHAPTER XX.

"What do you mean?" Margery demanded, staring from the necklace to each of them in turn. "There is the Blue Rose."

There certainly the Blue Rose seemed to be, exactly as it had been. To her eyes there was nothing wrong; but to the eyes of those two, both of them expert judges of stones, there had been substitution.

"It is paste," Stein said to her. "Oishi took the genuine stone out and put this in its place."

"After him!" cried Bruce Henderson. "Where is he?"

He was starting for the door. Stein held him back. "It is useless. Oishi is on his way to catch the five-ten."

"We can get there in time," looking at his watch.

"Yes, we could overtake Oishi, but that wouldn't help us. I know what happened. It wasn't ten minutes after he had the Blue Rose in his possession before he had transferred it to one of the organization."

"How?"

"There would have been some one under his window, waiting. We had messengers coming and going all the time; and one waiting within call at all times. No, I will have to go after it."

"Won't that be dangerous?" Margery asked fearfully.

"Not very," he answered, with an appearance of carelessness. "Anyhow, we must have it to return to Lord Wembry. I can get it."

"Oh, Rudolph, why take any risk for it? It brings nothing but misfortune to whomever has it."

"Misfortune to them who hold it unlawfully, perhaps. It won't do Lord Wembry any harm. And I shall not be

content until he has it. Besides, I won't have my recent associates imagine they can flout me. It would encourage them too much. Take the necklace back."

"Yes," said Bruce Henderson, "put it back. She will never know the difference, and will be just as happy. But how did she get it? Do you know, Margery?"

"No, I know nothing about that. She doesn't know that I know she has the necklace. I found it by accident after her strange conduct made me suspect her. I'll put it away now before she returns."

"How do you think she got it, Rudolph?" Bruce Henderson asked.

"Don't say until I get back," Margery begged; and ran quickly to replace the necklace.

"She's such a fool," growled Henderson, "that I don't understand it at all."

"Fool is too strong a word, Mr. Henderson," Stein said gravely. "I have no doubt Mrs. Henderson is a little unbalanced; that makes her the more cunning. You should be more patient with her. It would be a wise thing to contrive some way of discovering the necklace and giving it to her. Margery could easily do it."

"That is true, papa," said Margery, who had returned in time to hear the latter part of Stein's words. "You won't care if she has the diamonds now, will you?"

"No; let her have them. Now what's your theory, Rudolph?"

"Of course, it is only a guess. You see, her mind was on the injustice of your not giving her the necklace from the very first; and she brooded over it far more than you suspect."

"Yes," agreed Margery, "she felt very bitter."

"I suspected her," resumed Stein, "as soon as I learned the necklace had been taken from your room. If I had known nothing about her desire for them, her manner that morning would have made me suspicious."

"I know," growled Henderson, "the cat-that-swallowed-the-canary expression. I saw it, but I thought it was her joy that the thing had been stolen from me. But how did she know where it was?"

"Not easy to say, but my notion is that, for some reason, she was in your room when you came up. She might easily have hidden behind your couch here in her fright, meaning to go out when you were asleep. If I am anywhere near right so far, the rest is easy. She could have seen you put the necklace away, could have seen that you were heavy with the sleep induced by the drug, and could have taken the necklace without the least risk."

"But what would she be doing in here, Rudolph?" queried Margery.

"That is the weak point in the argument."

"No," snarled Bruce Henderson, "it's the strong point. She was forever trying to find letters from some woman, in the hope of getting something on me. I knew she came in here often. And no doubt it was just as you say, Rudolph. That would account for everything. Why didn't that fool of a Schoeffel think of that? He said it was Oishi."

"And a very clever guess, too, Mr. Henderson. If I had really been a criminal I would have shaken in my boots when that fellow was on my trail. As it was, I enjoyed it."

"I wonder where it was when we were all down here that morning? Mamma didn't seem at all worried when a search was spoken of."

"She probably had it concealed about her somewhere. Oishi and I both thought so. Well, she'll be happy now, and happier when she knows the necklace is hers. What do you say to a brisk walk, Margery? The ban is off of me now, you know."

In a few minutes the two lovers were swinging side by side along the driveway. There were miles of road within the limits of the estate, so there was no need to go outside for a long walk.

Margery was exceedingly happy. Her father's crime seemed of so long ago, and he was so ready to atone for it, that it was easy for her to minimize it; and the main thing was that the man she loved should have won out against what seemed invincible opposition.

She stepped briskly along by his side, sometimes clinging to his strong arm, sometimes encircled by that arm, but mostly by his side, their arms touching and their fingers entwined.

It seemed as if the whole world had become an Eden, with no more care or evil in it. Then suddenly there was a sharp report, and a blade of flame cut the blackness of the night, for the road at that point cut through a heavy growth of timber.

Stein felt his hat move on his head. Margery uttered a sharp cry of fear. Stein leaped like a panther at the spot where the shot had come from. There was another shot that went wild, and then the sound of a struggle as Stein grappled with his assailant.

It was such a strange and novel experience in Margery's life that she didn't know how to act. For a moment she stood straining her eyes to discern which of the indistinct figures was Rudolph, and wringing her hands. Then she ran toward them, bent on helping her lover.

"It's all right, Margy, dear," he said, almost as she reached them. "I have him. I'll tie his hands and then we'll see who it is."

He had thrown the man on the ground, face down. With his handkerchief, he tied his hands behind him. Then, in a language Margery did not understand or even recognize, but which, in fact, was Chinese, he said:

"Get up!" and with a powerful pull had the fellow on his feet.

"Are you hurt, Rudolph?"

"Not at all; excepting, perhaps, in my feelings; though I ought not be that even. Come!" he ordered sternly in Chinese. "I want to take you to the light and see which of my friends this is."

There was an electric lamp about a quarter of a mile farther on the road, and toward this the very reluctant prisoner was led. And when they were under it, Stein swung the man about and looked at his sullen, fierce face.

To Margery the man was only a Chinaman in coat and trousers; a tall, powerful fellow with a brutish face. To her lover he was an individual, a person to be recognized.

"Hah!" he ejaculated scornfully.

"Do you know him?" Margery asked fearfully. "How wicked he looks!"

"Wicked!" and Stein laughed shortly. "No, he is simply faithful. And I am happy to say he is not on the list of my friends, past or present. So, you poor fool," he went on, reverting to the Chinese tongue, "they were so afraid of me that they set you to kill me. Didn't you know you must fail in such a task? What has Li against you that he assigned you to this?"

With a contempt that must have stung the would-be assassin, he flung him around and untied his hands.

"Now, go back to Li and tell him that if he is so anxious to kill me, he may try it to-morrow night. Tell him I shall go to see him at the headquarters to-morrow night at eight o'clock, and that I expect him to be there or take the consequences. You know I could have you put in prison for this, don't you?"

"Yes," was the half-sullen, half-frightened response.

"Well, I don't do so because I know you have only obeyed orders. But have you thought that when such an order

was given to you it was because they wanted to get rid of you? Have you?"

"No."

"You know who I am, don't you?"

"Yes. I had to do what I was told."

"Did you think you could kill me? Bah! Li wanted more to get rid of you than of me. He thought I would kill you. Now go back to him and give him my message. Tell him I spared your life to show how little I fear him or his men. Go!"

The man turned and fled. "I was trying to scare him a little and to scare my late friends still more," Stein said, turning to Margery.

"What does it mean?" she demanded, clinging to him in terror now that it was all over. "Why did he try to shoot you? Why did you let him go? Won't he do it again? Are you not in danger from him now?"

"Where shall I begin answering?" he laughed. "No, I am in no danger from him now. He may try it again, though I think not. I let him go because I thought that the best way of answering those who set him to do this. And why did he try to shoot me? I'm not so sure of the answer to that, but I think it was because they are afraid of me. Anyhow, I hope that is the reason, for that will help me most."

He took her back to the house by footpaths so as to avoid any possible danger. They maintained silence most of the way, speaking in whispers when they spoke at all; but when they were in the house, Margery drew him into the music room.

"Those Chinamen are going to try to kill you, Rudolph; aren't they?"

"They have tried and failed, dear."

"They will try again; you know they will. Promise me you won't go after the Blue Rose. What does it matter if it is lost? We are rich enough to pay Lord Wembry whatever he thinks it is worth. We can tell him it is lost and can't be recovered. Promise me, Rudolph!"

"You don't want me to be a coward, dear, do you? It won't be half as bad for me to go to these people and show my scorn of them as it would be to act as if I feared them. Then they might pursue me. No, I must be the pursuer."

She nestled close to him, looking up into his face with anxious eyes. "What would I do without you now? Don't you care more for me than for the Blue Rose? More than for your pride?"

"It isn't a question of either of those things, dearest," he answered very soberly. "I know these people better than you possibly can. I must meet and crush them, or they will crush me. There, that is the truth! I didn't want you to know; but, after all, you are your father's daughter, and you can face the truth. I must go to them."

"Risking your life?"

"It may be so, dear. I don't really think so, but I cannot deny there is some risk. They are afraid of me. And," he added after a short pause, "they have cause to be."

She studied his set face for a space, then sighed. "I thought papa was firm enough, but he is nothing to you, I can see that."

"But, dear," he urged, smiling tenderly at her, "I am doing this because, in a sense, I feel that I must. I don't care for the Blue Rose; but, in order to show them that I am the master, I must take it from them. They must be taught a lesson."

"I hope you will never want to teach me any lessons," she sighed. "I know I would have no chance at all with such a masterful man. You will be careful?"

"Very careful. And you know there is nothing I would not do at your request if it was safe. Do you know that those people, if they could not reach me in any other way, are quite capable of doing it through you? There would

be no peace for either of us unless I scotch this snake at the very outset."

"Oh, I'm only a silly girl, after all, Rudolph. I know that you must do what you think best. And I am sure you know what is best. Just the same, you are my Blue Rose, and I can't do without you. That is why I am foolish about this. When must you go?"

"To-night, immediately after dinner."

She threw her arms about his neck and laid her lips on his, and clung to him for a moment. Then she let him go, her eyes filled with tears. "I won't say any more," she assured him. "Shall we dress for dinner?"

"My brave little sweetheart!" he murmured, folding her to his breast.

"I think I will go to the city and stop at a hotel to-night," she said. "You won't say no to that, will you?"

"I shall be only too glad to have you."

She went to her rooms, and he went to the library, where he found Bruce Henderson, who had dressed for dinner and was filling in the time waiting for that meal by working.

Stein told him frankly what had taken place. Henderson listened with blanched face. "They mean to carry their plot through to the end. They feel that you stand between them and me now; is that it?"

"Partly it. Mostly they are afraid of me. I was their brains, even though they used me as a tool. Now they think I can form a combination to overcome them, and they want to put me out of the way. You they will pursue to your final ruin and death. That is their plan."

"What will you do?"

"Go to the city to-night and make them realize that I am the master."

"You will need some help."

"Yes. Can you get Beeston on the wire now? I would like to arrange with him for some men."

"Yes, I can get him easily. He always holds himself ready. But I shall go, too. Don't underrate me, Rudolph."

Stein smiled as he looked into the strong, fierce face. "Don't you suppose I studied you carefully before I attacked you? I ask no better companion in my adventure. Get Beeston and tell him to have six of his best—his most dependable and most intelligent men ready at ten o'clock at the Grand Central Station. He won't bunch them, of course. We will pass through the waiting room, and they will follow us carelessly. Don't fail to impress on him that it will be a dangerous visit we are going to make. We are going to break into the worst of all the Chinese secret societies; and our lives won't be worth two cents—unless we are careful, as I expect to be," and he smiled.

"Why not talk to him yourself?"

"No; you would better. By the way, Margery says she will go to the city with us and stop at a hotel. It really is better. She will be wretched to stay here and wait for us."

At dinner, Mrs. Henderson and Stein were the only ones in good spirits. Bruce Henderson seldom was anything but glum when he sat at this own table opposite his wife; Miss Darwin was still suffering from the effects of her error, although Margery had gone to her and assured her that she forgave her and understood; Margery herself felt as if a dark shadow brooded over Rudolph, and that was far worse to her than to have been threatened in her own person.

Mrs. Henderson took the announcement of the departure of the three with the calmness of perfect indifference. Her husband she was always glad to be rid of; and about Margery and Stein she didn't concern herself, because Margery always did what she pleased to do, and what the secretary did was none of her affair, anyhow.

They went in to the city in a swift

touring car. Margery was taken to a hotel where Bruce Henderson was well known, and where, consequently, she would receive the best attention. She clung for a moment to her lover, begging him to be careful; then she let him go.

"There is more danger than you want me to know," she said. "I am sure of it; but if you say you must go I shan't say any more. Only if you don't come back to me, I shall not care to live."

## CHAPTER XXI.

Impassive and noncommittal as Oishi had been in his interview with Rudolph Stein, he was really inwardly perturbed that the man who had been like a brother to him for so many years should now be in this relation to him of antagonist, almost enemy.

As Stein had conjectured, Oishi had searched Mrs. Henderson's rooms until he had found the necklace. Years before, a paste duplicate had been made under the direction of the lapidary who had cut the stone in Amsterdam. A clumsy scheme of substitution had been devised at the time, which young Stein had put aside when he was taken into the association for the punishment of Bruce Henderson.

Under direction of his mother, Oishi, or Yung Wing, as he properly was, had taken the Blue Rose from its setting, and had put the paste substitute in its place, keeping Rudolph Stein in ignorance of what he did.

He knew, and he told his mother so, that the substitute would not deceive any expert for one minute; but he had done her bidding, and had afterward taken the tone he had with Rudolph in accordance with her instructions. He was, nevertheless, very angry for what he had done.

He had dropped the real Blue Rose out of his window to a confederate immediately after stealing it; and afterward had waited calmly for the arrest he knew was to take place.

His release and Rudolph's evident understanding with Bruce Henderson only proved what he had feared would be the result of the love affair with Margery. He rather despised Rudolph for what he considered his deplorable weakness, but his affection for him remained.

What Rudolph had said about the truth in their interview puzzled him. He had no idea of what truth, or truth about what, he meant. And that about intended treachery on the part of his mother and Li; what about that? If they had no good excuse for doubting Rudolph, they had been most treacherous; and certainly if it had not been for Rudolph's great cleverness the association would still have been floundering.

When he reached New York he went downtown to the Chinese quarter and sought his mother through an intricate system of alleyways, in a house which stood in the space midway between the houses on the two streets.

The surroundings were squalid to the last degree, the odors awful, the denizens sinister and appalling. In the house itself the appearance of things was totally different. On the lower floor it was clean and decent in the way of prosperous, hard-working Chinese; but it was when the upper floor was reached that the great change appeared.

All the luxury of which the Chinese mind could conceive were combined with such Western conveniences as appealed to an Oriental. There was steam heat to warm the rooms and soft, thick carpets on the floors.

Yung Wing had had no difficulty in penetrating to the house, or in entering it. He had casually nodded to a man here and there, but otherwise had given no sign of acquaintance with the place. He had made his way slowly and dubiously, stopping now and again to look

about as if to make sure he was going correctly.

All that was a part of the system of approach arranged for with the greatest care and detail. A stranger who had attempted to go the way Yung Wing did would have been in trouble within one minute. And even if he had reached the house, the door would have been closed to him, nor could he have gained entrance except by breaking the door down.

Once in the house, Yung Wing betrayed no further hesitation, but went upstairs quickly and opened the door of the front room. An overwarm wave of air, laden with the languorous odor of burning sandalwood, passed over him as he stood on the threshold.

The room was lighted by electric lamps subdued by rose-colored, ground-glass globes. Yung Wing cast a swift glance around and closed the door behind him.

There were two people in the room: a woman, dressed in full Chinese costume, who sat huddled in a luxurious armchair, and a tall, lean man, also in Chinese costume, as affected in America by laundrymen, who sat in a straight-backed chair smoking a long Chinese pipe.

"Mother! Li!" Yung Wing said, by way of salutation.

"Ah, my boy!" the woman said, in a weak voice. Li only looked at him, and gave him a scarcely perceptible nod.

"You got the Blue Rose, mother?" demanded Yung Wing, speaking from the first in Chinese. "I dropped it down to Ah Fong early this morning."

"Li has it."

Yung Wing looked inquiringly at Li, who, however, merely went on smoking without making any sign.

"You don't seem surprised to see me here," Yung Wing said, sitting down between his mother and Li. "Did you know we were not arrested?"

"We knew that," Li answered. "Tell us about it."

Yung Wing gave a brief but complete account of what had taken place in the library at the time of his arrest.

"You see!" said his mother; "we were right in suspecting Rudolph."

"Tell me the truth about Rudolph, mother," Yung Wing said abruptly.

Li looked curiously at him. His mother laughed; then coughed. After subduing the cough, she demanded: "Why do you ask that? The truth!" She laughed again, but more carefully so as not to bring on the cough.

"Rudolph told me to ask you for the truth."

"Then he knows it himself. I was sure he would find out the moment you told me he was in love with that girl. Was he furious?"

"You know Rudolph better than that, mother. He doesn't get furious. What is this truth he spoke of?"

"Shall I tell him, Li?"

"Why not? He might as well know. It doesn't matter now. We have the Blue Rose. There isn't much more to do."

"No, we can't do much more now," she said. "If it had not been for Rudolph we could not have done so much. He is very clever."

She laughed again, and this time Li laughed with her, a short, dry cackle of a laugh. Yung Wing looked curiously from one to the other. His mask of impassivity seemed to have dropped from him in this atmosphere.

"Well!" he said somewhat curtly. "Isn't it something I can laugh at, too? Rudolph is clever; cleverer than all the rest of us together."

"Maybe, maybe," she admitted; "but we used him finely. Listen! Henderson did not kill his father. I made his mother, and him later, believe that, so that I might use them when the time came."

She chuckled and coughed. Li

watched in sinister silence. Yung Wing looked from one to the other. "Well?" he queried.

"Rudolph's father and yours fought over the Blue Rose. Your father was mortally wounded, Rudolph's father might have lived. Henderson robbed both of them and went away. I went inside, and at your father's command I killed Rudolph's father. Now you know."

"This," murmured Yung Wing, "is what he meant by the truth. He didn't hate me for it, but was kind and friendly as before."

"You are not thinking he was hardly used?" demanded Li suddenly, his quick ear catching the muttered words.

Yung Wing's mother chuckled wickedly. "Rudolph was so clever that we gave him a fine education after their Western fashion so that he might be of use to us. And his mother preached vengeance to him all the time she lived. So we used him." She chuckled again.

"We're done with him now," said Li.

"What d'you mean by that?" demanded Yung Wing sharply. He had caught the sinister note in the words.

Li stood up deliberately and moved toward the other end of the room, where a curtain of glass beads on silk threads hung before a doorway.

"I mean," answered Li coldly, "that by this time he is as dead as his father. He has paid the price of being the son of the man who killed my brother. Now it is Henderson's turn."

"You have had Rudolph killed?" cried Yung Wing, leaping to his feet.

"Sit down, my boy!" said his mother. "He never was one of us; he never could have been. He is better dead. Now, we will finish Henderson and then go back to Canton. I am getting old and feeble, and I wish to die in my own country."

"How was he killed?" demanded Yung Wing of Li.

"He was shot. I sent a man—not one of our own, but a northern man—to do it."

"You have had no report yet?" demanded Yung Wing quickly.

"Not yet. I am expecting it any moment."

"Then he isn't dead," cried Yung Wing triumphantly. "Do you know him so little as to think he could be so easily killed? And now let me tell you it shall not be. He is a white man, an enemy of our race, and I may never see him again, but he has been like my brother. We have eaten from the same dish of rice, we have slept in the same bed, learned from the same books; and you shall do him no harm."

"My boy, my boy!" remonstrated his mother.

"I mean what I say."

Li stood in an attitude of listening as if to something outside of the room, in the room adjoining. He only waved his long, slender hand and smiled contemptuously.

"Our man is here, waiting. We will hear his report first and discuss the future with you afterward," he said; and with that parted the curtain of beads and opened the door. "You are back. Come in here!"

The big, northern Chinaman, who had shot at Stein, entered the room sullenly, and stood waiting to be questioned.

"Well, well?" demanded Li. Yung Wing bent forward in his anxiety.

"I shot twice and missed him. He caught me, tied my hands, took me to a light, saw who I was, and set me free, despising me."

"Is that all?" Li asked coldly but with a menace in his tone.

"He said you had something against me, or you would not have sent me against him."

"And what more?"

"He said if you were so anxious to kill him that he would be here to-morrow night at eight o'clock, and that you

must be here or take the consequences. He said you wanted to get rid of me," the man repeated sullenly, and looked with ugly doubt at the other.

"And you were fool enough to believe that? I should have known better than to send you on such an errand."

"I had nothing against him, anyhow."

"It is enough if you are sent to do a thing. Go now!"

The man left the room, Li closed the door after him and stood as if reflecting. Yung Wing stepped out in front of his mother.

"You understand, Li," he said sharply and with decision, "I won't have him harmed. I mean what I say."

"Tut, tut, my son!" said his mother. "Are you in charge, or is Li?"

"It does not matter. I say Rudolph shall not be harmed. Anyhow, it is dangerous. You ought to know that he is terrible as an enemy. If you set him actively against us, it will be the end. You ought to know it without my telling you."

Li looked at him with that sinister impassivity that Yung Wing had used so effectively in his relations with Henderson. "And if I disobey you, what will you do?" he asked.

"I will warn Rudolph and throw my lot in with his."

"His father killed yours," cried out his mother in horror.

"I will not have Rudolph harmed," Yung Wing insisted obstinately.

"Well, well!" Li said indifferently. "I don't care. Let him go. We have much money and the Blue Rose. That is enough."

"Quite enough. Where is the Blue Rose? Why didn't you keep it, mother? Where is it, Li?"

"I am taking care of it. Have you any objection?" He stood facing Yung Wing, his back to the wall near the door, his hands behind him. As he talked he quietly thrust out a long finger and pushed a button a certain number of times.

Yung Wing noticed the movement without changing countenance. He felt carelessly outside his coat for the automatic resting in his hip pocket. He knew that there was deadly enmity now between him and Li; not because of anything of recent development, but as something in the nature of things as they now stood.

"I have no especial objection to your keeping the Blue Rose, but it would have been better if mother had kept it. You have the money in your name, too; and these things belong to us together. Now that the affair is ended, it will be wiser to make a division. Don't you think so, mother?"

"Li will make a division, of course," she said. "That is understood."

"I expect to make a division; certainly. Do you want the Blue Rose cut up and given out in pieces now?"

Yung Wing had a sense of the talk being futile, and being carried on for a purpose. There was something in Li's manner that warned him. He tried to fathom what might lie behind.

"I am not so foolish as to demand that, as you know very well," he answered quietly, never relaxing his watchfulness.

Li smiled as if content, and made a slight, friendly gesture. He filled his pipe and went toward the mantel to get a match. At one side of the hearth stood a low, teakwood table, on which was a lacquered tray holding a number of pieces of china. As he reached over for the match his foot seemed to slip and the table was overturned, throwing the china onto the hearthstone with a loud crash.

Yung Wing involuntarily took a step forward as if to save the tray. At the same instant his mother uttered a shrill cry of alarm. He cast a swift glance at her, and then behind him, for there her horrified eyes were staring.

A half-naked Chinaman had suddenly entered by a doorway behind him, under cover of the noise made by the falling china. The naked blade in his hand and the ferocious expression on his countenance left no doubt of his purpose.

Yung Wing turned to face him, snatching his automatic from his hip pocket. Another cry from his mother made him leap to one side and look back. Li was already on him, however, and a struggle was instantaneous.

But Li's only object was to hold him in one position for a few seconds; and this he accomplished. The man with the knife leaped up and thrust it deep into Yung Wing's side.

A cry of agony from Yung Wing was followed by a shrill scream from his mother; but it was hardly uttered before Li had flung Yung Wing from him and had taken the sick woman by the throat.

"Strike!" he ordered the man; and the man thrust his blade through the woman's heart.

Yung Wing lay where he had been flung, the blood pouring out of his wound. Li bent over him and smiled savagely. Then he pushed the woman with his foot and laughed.

"Now, Ah Fong!" he said, "you and I are rich. Everything is ours. No one suspects anything?"

"No one saw me come in; I am sure of it."

"Good! Take hold of the old woman. We'll put her in her chair again. Here, first give me your knife. I'll make sure of Yung Wing. You put her in her chair. You can do it alone."

The man bent over with a brutal laugh and took the body in his arms. "Yes," he said, "I can do it alone."

He was straightening up when Li, with all his strength, thrust the knife into his naked body. It was shrewdly done; the man uttered but one low cry and dropped over the body he had taken in his arms.

Li looked at him with cold malevolence; then pulled the woman's gown out of his right hand and thrust the handle of the knife into it, so that it looked as if he had held it when he died.

He took another similar knife from his belt and laid it beside the body of Yung Wing; then turned out the lights and softly left the room.

## CHAPTER XXII.

At ten o'clock Rudolph Stein and Bruce Henderson passed through the waiting room of the Grand Central Station and out into the street. Without seeming to look Stein saw that they were followed, and led the way into a bar where there were tables.

They were soon joined by Beeston, to whom Stein had made a signal on entering. "Have them all in here," he said. "There are so few people here we won't be noticed any more than as a big party of men."

In a few minutes Beeston returned, followed by his men in pairs. They had two tables brought together and ordered something to drink, though nobody drank anything. Stein looked them over, and saw a lot of keen, bright men, physically fit and powerful.

"There is danger in this job, men," he said, in a low tone; "and if any one of you doesn't care for it, let him drop out now. Nothing may happen, or much may happen. I'm going into the secret parts of Chinatown."

Beeston glanced over the faces of his men. "They'll all stick, sir," he said. "I suppose it's the same job as up above there?"

"The same. Only we have no police authority, and I don't want any. That means that we must be discreet and prompt. I'll give my orders, and you've only to obey them. If any of you get

into trouble, Mr. Henderson and I will stand behind you."

"That's all right, Mr. Stone; you can depend on us. We made a bungle of the job up there; we'll try not to this time."

Stein smiled at Beeston. "Don't feel bad over that; it had to be that way. Even Schoeffel fell down on it, you know."

"Pull this off right, Beeston," interposed Bruce Henderson, "and you won't need to regret the other affair."

"We'll obey orders, won't we, men?"

"Sure thing. Tell us what to do, and we'll do it if we can."

"We'll take two automobiles from here and go to Chatham Square. Mr. Henderson and I will take three men. I'll post them and then go back for the others. You'll take charge of the second lot, Beeston. I don't want to do any talking when I get down there, so I'll tell you now what you are to do. Listen carefully! The places where I'm going to post you are the two exits that the leader uses, and the leader is the only one I want."

"He's a Chinaman?" demanded Beeston.

"Yes. He's rather tall and slender; about fifty years old, and will probably be dressed like a laundryman. You mustn't depend on that, however, but look at his face. He has a scar across his right cheek from his nose to his ear, almost. If he comes out, you're to hold him no matter what he does. I don't believe he will make a row to call the police, because he doesn't want to fall into their hands. If he does, just say who you are and trust us to make the matter straight at headquarters."

"Will there likely be many coming and going that way?"

"No. There may be a few. Oishi, who was Mr. Henderson's valet, may come out, and so may a middle-aged woman. Let them go out, but don't let them go back. Ask any question you like now? Anything?"

"I guess that'll do, sir; and we're ready."

When they reached Chatham Square the automobiles were dismissed, and Stein, followed by Henderson and the three men selected by Beeston, went west into the Chinese quarter.

They attracted some attention as they passed through the crowded streets —crowded even at that hour—but, presently, they turned into an alley and went on unnoticed until they came to a sort of dark pocket. Stein pointed out a door there as the one to watch, and then hastened away, leaving Bruce Henderson in charge.

He led the other party by another route and posted it in front of another door two blocks distant from the door watched by the first party. And there he left it and returned to the brightly lighted streets.

As he passed along alone he exchanged glances of recognition with men here and there, just as Yung Wing had done. These were all men who were within the outer circle and the secret society, and whose only part at such a time was to watch what strangers came and went, and to make quick report in case of anything suspicious.

He followed exactly the course taken by Yung Wing, and finally found himself in the house. He did then just as Yung Wing had done—went upstairs quickly and opened the door of the room.

He stood quite still, suspicious at once of the utter darkness there. He listened carefully, drawing his automatic.

"Any one here?" he asked softly.

A faint sigh came to his ears. He repeated his question, and then there came a gasping query: "You, Rudolph?"

"Yung Wing! What's the matter?"

"Light," was the faint response.

It never occurred to him that Yung Wing would be in any plot to harm him, so without hesitation he entered the room and felt where he knew the electric button would be to turn on the light. He turned it and looked around.

The horrid spectacle hit his eyes at once: the old woman dead, with Ah Fong's body over hers; and a few feet away Yung Wing, his eyes wide open, full of beseeching.

He was on his knees beside his old comrade in a moment. "Badly hurt, Yung?" he asked solicitously.

Yung Wing smiled faintly. "Done for. I knew you would come. When you said you'd be here to-morrow night, I knew that meant to-night."

"It was Li who did it?"

"Yes. And you were right," Yung Wing gasped painfully. "They used you. Our fathers fought; yours killed mine; my mother killed yours. Ah! Nothing but murder over that stone."

"I'm sorry you had to take your turn, Yung. Are you sure you are mortally hurt?"

"Sure. I only waited to see you. Always my best friend. You forgive me, Rudy?" He used the boyish diminutive and felt feebly for the other's hand. Stein, understanding, took the slender hand in his. "Good-by! I—I only—waited—for you. Rudy!"

"Yes?"

"Li—everything—money, Blue Rose—good-by!"

He was dead. Stein composed the body of his old companion peacefully and stood up. There were tears in his eyes, for he had loved his Chinese playfellow. He brushed the tears away and looked around. There was too much for him to do to permit of yielding to sorrow then.

He looked around and understood. Li had had Ah Fong help him do his murderous work, and then had killed him so that there would be no witness against him, no living accomplice with whom he must share. And he saw how the attempt had been made to throw the blame on Ah Fong.

And, knowing the treacherous Li better than any of the others had done, he knew he must move quickly if he hoped to catch him before he got away with the loot. And Rudolph Stein had his heart set on returning the Blue Rose to Lord Wembry.

He had never trusted Li, but he had been so much stronger, so much cleverer than he that he had never before cared much what he did. Being himself the dominating spirit of the organization for the humiliation of Bruce Henderson, it had not mattered what the others did so that they refrained from interfering with his plans.

But if he had been so far indifferent, he yet had felt it wise to know as much as possible about the secret society, and especially about the hidden ways of Li in particular.

So now he knew where to look for the assassin. And he hoped that his message about coming to-morrow had deceived Li, even if it had not Yung Wing. At any rate, he knew that if Li had not yet got away, he was surely caught, since there were only three outlets for him. The other two were covered by his men, and the third he would soon be on.

He sighed as he passed the body of Yung Wing, leaving the task of caring for his body and that of his mother to a later time. He left by the door he had entered by, and, feeling his way in the darkness, passed to the back of the house and out of a small door to an outside stairway that led to the small back yard.

A door in the fence let him through into another yard; and in the same way he traversed four small back yards. Then he turned and entered the back door of a tumble-down building that had once been a residence, but had since that time, long ago, been a tenement

and a storehouse for rags picked from the street, and was now waiting to be torn down when the general cleaning up came.

When he reached this place he moved with soft, catlike steps to the cellar door. This he opened cautiously, went through, and closed without a sound. He felt his way across the inky blackness of the cellar, and felt along the wall until he came upon a door there.

He sighed softly as he opened it. He was near his goal, and was glad of it, for there had been mortal risk at every step since he left the house of death behind him.

The familiar, sickening odor of burning opium struck his nostrils the instant he opened the door. He put his automatic in his side pocket and held it ready in his hand; then stepped in and closed the door.

Victims of the awful habit were lying about everywhere; but, after being in the darkness of the other cellar, the dim light in this one was sufficient to enable him to pick his way along without stepping on any one or even disturbing any one.

Luckily the guardian of this section of the den was not in evidence, and if he was seen by any of the smokers, no doubt he was taken for a part of their fantastic dreams.

He crept up the stairs and along the hall, up the next flight and the next without encountering any one. There were clients enough in the house, but on the upper floors they were as anxious for privacy as he was; and the custodians of the place guarded only the front doors, up and down stairs.

Having reached the top floor, he was near the end of his quest. If Li were there, he should be in the front room. He should be alone, too, for this was his special hiding place, where only a chosen few were ever admitted, and where Stein hoped he would have his treasures.

He crept stealthily to the front-room door and listened. At first he caught no sound, and his heart sank, for he felt that if Li had escaped from there it would mean at the least a journey to San Francisco after him; and, perhaps, a trip across the ocean to China.

But some one was in the room; and as he listened he made out the soft passing to and fro of a light footfall. Li must be packing for immediate departure. He was in time.

He turned the knob very softly. It turned easily enough, but the door did not open. He felt around the sides of the doorframe and found that the door opened inward; and he knew by the sense of feeling that it was not a heavy door.

To burst it open was dangerous, however. Some one might be near at hand. He reflected a moment, then scratched at the door. There was an instant cessation of sound in the room. He scratched again; and this time he could hear stealthy footsteps approaching.

"Who is it?" demanded the voice of Li.

Stein remembered the name of the keeper of the house. "Ko Li," he responded, in a hushed voice. "Very important."

He could hear the key turn in the lock, could hear a bolt shot; then the door opened cautiously to let the man inside peer out.

It was sufficient for Stein. His hand shot out and grasped Li's throat in a grip of steel. Then he pushed his way into the room, and, with his free hand, imprisoned the other's wrists, as he raised his hands to pull away the choking fingers.

"Useless, Li," Stein said sternly. "Stop struggling or I will choke you. You know I can do it."

Li ceased to struggle, and the grip on his throat loosened a trifle.

But Stein had no intention of giving Li any opportunity to raise his voice in

a cry of alarm. He relaxed his grip in order not to choke him, for he had ceased to struggle because he was losing consciousness.

Stein dragged him to a couch at one side of the room, and there laid him down; and then, before he could recover consciousness enough to cry out, he stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth. After that, to tie his hands and feet was the work of but few minutes.

By the time this was accomplished, however, Li had recovered his senses completely, and was staring steadily at Stein, who, on his part, was looking down at him with an icy sternness that boded him no good.

"You are a murderer, Li," he said, in a low tone. "I have just come from Yung Wing, who lived long enough to tell me what happened. You will understand, then, that I am in no mood to trifle with you. The first effort you make to escape or to call help I shall kill you as remorselessly as I would a poisonous snake."

With that he turned about and studied the room. He had been in it before and knew its general contents, so he was looking only for what was new to him. This, he found, consisted mainly in two leather bags of large size, which Li had been filling with his clothes and other belongings that he wished to take away.

It was plainly manifest that he was packing for immediate departure; and that he was not contemplating a return.

The bags Stein emptied out without hesitation, and went carefully over the contents, letting nothing escape his investigation that promised the least chance of being a hiding place for the Blue Rose. Of course, it was possible that the stone had been sent on by some safe and undiscoverable means, but Stein thought he knew his man well enough to doubt that. At any rate, he would make a thorough search.

He found absolutely nothing of interest to him in the contents of the bags, though he discovered that Li watched all that he did with avid interest, which gave him some encouragement.

However, search as he would, he found nothing, so he went to Li and thoroughly went over him, loosing his garments so as to overlook no possible hiding place. But again he was unsuccessful.

He dared not take too much time, but on the other hand did not mean to give up until he was sure the stone was not there. He stood reflecting, and chanced to glance down at Li. He saw that he was studying him with the same eager interest he had noted before.

That gave him the idea that Li was fearful of the discovery of the hiding place of the stone; and now he began a survey of the apartment, furtively watching Li's eyes all the while, until he was sure that the place for him to search was near the heap of stuff that had been dumped out of the bags.

The pile had been so thoroughly searched that he picked up one of the bags and felt about in it, all the while watching Li. He was sure he detected anxiety in the beady black eyes, so he dropped the bag and took up the other one. The eyes betrayed intense relief.

That was enough. Stein now subjected the bag to the closest scrutiny, sure that in it lay the solution of the problem; but, if it had not been for the expression in Li's eyes, he would have thrown the bag aside. He thought hard as he studied the bag; and at last he understood. It had a double bottom.

In an instant his knife was out, and presently he had cut the bottom out of the bag. As he did so tightly pressed bundles of folded papers fell to the floor, and a small object wrapped in soft silk.

The papers on examination proved to be bonds to the amount of three millions. The small parcel was the Blue Rose. The value of the bonds Stein

did not stop to ascertain, but his first act was to unwrap the silk and disclose the wonderful Blue Rose.

"Hah!" he exclaimed, with a short laugh; the first sound he had uttered since he had begun his search. "This is what I came for, but it seems I shall go away richer by a few bonds, too."

He wrapped the diamond up again and disposed it and the bonds about his person securely. Then he went over and looked down at Li.

"I ought to kill you, Li," he said, "but, unfortunately for justice, I have a prejudice against being an executioner. So I shall leave you here and go notify the members of the society what you have intended to do. They will be here presently, and—perhaps set you free."

Li showed plainly enough that he wished to speak, but Stein had no wish to listen to him. He had accomplished all he had come for, and his only thought now was to get away in safety.

"I don't care to hear you, Li," he said curtly. "Whatever happens to you, you will deserve it. I will warn you, though, that if you give me the least trouble in the future—in case you should have any future—I will see that you are executed for murder."

He turned away and looked around to see if there was anything he would better do for his own safety. The room was lighted by an old-fashioned oil lamp, which stood on a small bamboo table, and he was half minded to put it out; then decided that it was unnecessary, and went out, clasing the door and locking it on the outside. The key he threw in a corner of the hallway.

To get out of the house was as difficult and as full of risk as getting in, but he accomplished it, passed through the adjoining cellar and up the stairs. To creep out by the back door was now the work of a moment; and, once in the little back yard, it was no longer necessary to retrace his steps, for the exit was by way of a narrow alleyway adjoining the house.

The door at the end was a strong affair, covered with sheet iron, and secured by three ingeniously contrived bolts that shot back by the action of a lever and sprang into place again by the closing of the door. There was no way of opening the door from the outside.

It was at this door that Bruce Henderson and his men were stationed. And so it was that when Stein stepped out into the street, he was instantly surrounded before he was recognized.

"You're the only one who has come out," Henderson said quickly.

"It's all right," was the answer; "we may go now. Chatham Square, boys!" Then as the men went ahead, he whispered to Bruce Henderson, "I have the Blue Rose."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

In the little parlor at the hotel, with the doors closed and the window blinds drawn, Rudolph Stein—or Stone, since he so elected to call himself—took the silk-wrapped package from his inner waistcoat pocket and disclosed the Blue Rose.

Margery took it in her hand and held it lying in her soft, pink palm, where it glittered and shot out myriad rays of iridescent light.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she murmured.

"Beautiful, indeed," responded Rudolph, "but terrible, and useless. It has been the cause of so many deaths that I could never take any joy in it. So far it has brought nothing but disaster to whomever possessed it. And it began its fatal career before ever it reflected a ray of light."

Bruce Henderson took it in his hand and turned it over and over. "It is wonderful," he said; "but I shall be glad never to see it again."

He handed it back to Rudolph, who silently wrapped it up again.

"What shall we do with it?" Margery asked.

"I thought it was to be given to Wembry," said her father.

"But who shall give it to him? It can't be sent, and, anyhow, you won't want to write him a letter about it."

"You'll take it to him, won't you, Rudolph?"

"Yes, but I have a suggestion. You don't want to see him, and yet you should be represented. Why not let Margery go with me? We can give it to him as representing the three men who took it from him, for I can speak for Yung Wing."

Margery approved of the idea at once, and Bruce Henderson was indifferent. "Do anything you like. I'm sick of the whole affair. The only thing I'm glad of is this, and I want you to know it, Rudolph: I'm fairly delighted to be friends with you. If you'll come into partnership with me, we can skin Wall Street between us."

Rudolph Stone laughed. "But I don't want to skin anybody, Mr. Henderson; and why should you? There's a lot of fine constructive work to be done that you are just the man for. There's money in it and credit, too. Why not go in for that?"

"Whatever you like, Rudolph." And so, in a word, was settled that career of usefulness, instead of havoc and destruction, that is now making the firm of Henderson & Stone famous over the world.

Rudolph now brought out the bonds he had taken from Li—a trifle over three millions as the examination revealed—and suggested that a half million in value should be given with the Blue Rose to Lord Wembry to cover the other diamonds taken.

"Do whatever you like," was all Bruce Henderson would say. "Get it over as soon as you can, and don't let me hear anything more about it."

So it was arranged between Margery and Rudolph that they would call on Lord Wembry together the next day.

Rudolph had said nothing about Li to Margery or her father, and they had not thought to ask any questions; but if he had not said anything he had thought much, for he knew that when Li was released, as he was sure to be before very long, he was certain to make trouble.

He had not carried out his threat of betraying Li's treachery to the secret society, because he did not wish to be instrumental in having him murdered, though to have him so disposed of was the simplest solution of the problem of how to render him harmless.

He was thinking of this as he ate his breakfast in the morning, and was trying to make up his mind, when his eye was caught by a small item which he might well have overlooked. It was headed: "A Fire In Chinatown."

He read it over and then went to the telephone and called up the fire department and asked for information.

It seemed that the fire had occurred in a house secretly devoted to opium smoking; that everybody had been dragged out in safety excepting one man in the top of the house. The fire had evidently started in his room, and for that reason had not reached the lower floors before the wretched opium fiends could be saved.

"Do you know the name of the man who perished in the fire?" asked Rudolph anxiously.

"The keeper of the place says his name was Li something or other, a very important man down there."

"Thank you!" said Rudolph, and hung up the receiver.

So Li had come to a horrible end. And as Rudolph reflected, it seemed altogether probable that Li had rolled on the floor in his struggle to free himself and had overturned the lamp on the light, unstable table. It was a horrible death to die, but after what the

wretch had done, it was not possible for Rudolph to feel any discomfort.

Lord Wembry was in the midst of packing to return to England when the cards of Miss Henderson and Mr. Rudolph Stone were handed to him. At first he was minded to say he could not see them; then decided he would.

It seemed to him that he could see, the moment they entered his parlor, that they were lovers. He greeted them cordially, however, being far too much of a man to hold a grudge against his successful rival, or to bear any ill will to Margery because he despised her father.

"We have something very strange to say and do, Lord Wembry," Margery began. "Mr. Stone will speak for me, for himself, and for one other. Do you remember Oishi, papa's valet?"

"The Jap who was a Chinaman? Yes."

"He is the third one Mr. Stone will speak for. Now, tell him, Rudolph, please." And when Lord Wembry lifted his eyebrows at Rudolph, she blushed and added, "We are engaged."

"My congratulations, both of you," said Wembry, with great heartiness. "The most I can say to you, Mr. Stone, to prove the sincerity of my congratulations is that I would have done anything in the world to take her away from you."

They all laughed at that; and from that moment the interview became a pleasant one, instead of the ordeal Margery had feared it would be.

"In 1895," Rudolph said, when the time came that he could talk, "Margery's father, my father, and Yung Wing's father were employed in different capacities in the mines in South Africa in which you are now so largely interested."

"My word!" murmured Lord Wembry, very much taken aback.

"This is not a pleasant story, Lord Wembry, so I am going to tell it in the fewest possible words and in the plainest."

"Why tell it? I know something about it already. What?"

"I know you do, but you don't know all. Our fathers conspired together to rob the mines of diamonds, and had a clever system of doing so. In the end they got together a great many fine, white stones and one huge blue stone. Then they quarreled, and Margery's father, on the death of the other two —a death in which he had no part whatever—took the diamonds. The small diamonds he sold, the big one—the Blue Rose—he kept. Here is the Blue Rose which the children of the three men return to you. And here are bonds amounting to half a million dollars in value, which will cover the value of the diamonds and the interest."

"My word! What?" was all Lord Wembry could say for the moment when the wonderful stone was handed to him, and the package of bonds laid on the table by his side.

He was for giving the bonds back, even for presenting the Blue Rose to Margery for a wedding gift, promising to make it right with the shareholders. But they refused utterly.

"If you will shake hands with me and try to feel kindly toward papa, that will be enough," Margery said.

"Certainly, certainly! What?" agreed Lord Wembry.

"He's a fine man," said Rudolph afterward, when they were on their way back to the hotel. "He's so fine I hope he'll get rid of that stone in a very short time. It ought to belong to royalty. Then it won't matter."

And to-day the Blue Rose does belong to royalty.

And Margery belongs to Rudolph.

THE END.

# That Bird Called Love

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

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**In which a circus man decides there is money in romance, and takes a flier. It looked like a gamble with very little risk. But you never can tell**

THERE was a tinge of tan in the face of Ballyhoo Bud, of the late-lamented Great Southwest Triumvirate Circus, Hippodrome, and Mammoth Menagerie, that did not come from the beating sun of a circus lot. There were callouses, also, on his hands that had not resulted from dealing forth tickets in front of a side show. There were wrinkles about his narrow eyes which had not resulted from laughter. Quite the opposite. One doesn't laugh much when one is working the business end of a heading machine in the wheat fields of Kansas at harvest time. Especially when one has wandered hurriedly away from anything that looks like work for the greater part of his life.

But, once in a long while, work is really necessary. It is decidedly necessary when one must have clothes and a place to sleep, and something to put into the stomach. And so for three long weeks Ballyhoo Bud had worked. But now——

Well, now it was different. For Ballyhoo Bud had just wandered forth from the Ideal Clothing Store, to look downward at a new suit, new shoes, and a new shirt and tie—and to feel in his pocket fifteen dollars remaining. You save about all you get when you're working in the harvest fields. That's about all you have time to do. And two and a half a day, with meals and bed thrown in, mounts up. Once more Ballyhoo Bud looked at his clothing, and then at the small-town life of the street before him. He stretched his long arms. He wiggled a lengthy leg far to one side, and reached for a cigarette. Then he grinned as he surveyed the small stores, the wagons of the farmers, and the remainder of the commercial life of Hebecker's one street.

"Guess I'll stick a while," he murmured to himself. "This dump looks good."

He turned and ambled disjointedly down the street. Two blocks, and he stopped to stare at a rooms-and-board sign. He ascended the steps of the veranda, with its cane-bottom chairs and tête-à-tête swing, then hesitated before he knocked on the door.

Within, some one was banging an out-of-tune piano. Also, some one was singing, in a high voice, with tremolos in it, and a crack now and then. Ballyhoo Bud perked his head far to one side.

"Some canary!" he muttered, then listened again. The first chorus was over and the second beginning:

"Will you love me, darlink-k-k, when I'm gray,
When my youth-ful char-rums have flown ——"

Ballyhoo Bud knocked. A sudden jumble of discords, then silence. A second or so more, and Ballyhoo Bud's long neck craned forward.

"You the landlady?" he asked.

He knew she was, even before she

answered him. There was something about her face, and the peaked hair atop her head, and the general type of the clothing—not to mention a certain austere expression at the corners of the mouth—which told him very plainly that she was the landlady. But he waited for her affirmative nod of the head and her look of appraisal. Then he reached for the latch.

"I've come to stay with you for a couple o' weeks, providin' the rate's right. I'm Mr. Ferdinand Budsworth, circus agent. I was kind o' lookin' this town over an' thought maybe——"

"Circus?" She looked at him queerly for a moment, then a sudden expansive smile wiped out the austere expression at the corners of the mouth. "Are you a circus man? *Do* come in. I've always been so curious to meet a circus man——"

"Aw, go on; you're kiddin' me!" Ballyhoo grinned with his comedy, and edged closer to the door. "I look like anybody else, don't I?"

"Oh, yes, of course." The door had swung open by now. "But you must be so interesting! You know"—she looked up at him admiringly—"you find so few people who are really interesting in a small town like this! *Do* let me take your hat!"

"Yeh—yeh—I've noticed that about these here small burgs. Pretty much all dead from their ankles up, ain't they?" Ballyhoo Bud stuck his hat out into the air. "Say, I guess I'll stick around this dump for a couple o' weeks. Gimme a nice flop, will you——"

"I beg pardon——"

"A bed, you know. A nice joint to sleep in. A good room—you get me, don't you? I'm a pretty swell guy—that is, I like things decent, you know. An'——"

"Yes, yes, of course. Oh, goodness!" And she waved a hand girlishly in the air. "I was just so flustered, I forgot to tell you my name. Geraldina Perkins."

"Miss?" Ballyhoo Bud stared down at her suddenly. The landlady laughed a kittenish little laugh.

"Yes—Miss. It used to be just plain Geraldine, but I put the 'a' on. It sounds more poetical, don't you think?"

"Sure, Mike," Ballyhoo agreed. "Say, you serve scoffs here, too, don't you?"

Miss Geraldina Perkins leaned forward, with somewhat of a puzzled look.

"Serve what?"

"Scoffs? The feed bag—meals?"

"Oh, yes. Goodness, is that what you call them with the circus? How interesting! I just must have a good, long chat with you! Your life is *so* interesting. But it must be terribly hard, too."

"Oh, sure!" Ballyhoo Bud's face became long and doleful. "Awful hard. Nothin' but work all th' time. You see, I got th' whole circus t' look after, an' everything, an' it makes things tougher'n hog leather. Sure, we'll get together some o' these times an' spill a lot o' conversation at each other. I'm there with that stuff. You run this here joint all by yourself, do you?"

"Yes." Miss Geraldina Perkins was leading the way up the stairs to the display of the room. "Just for my amusement, you know. One gets, oh, so tired of doing nothing, don't you think, or do you?"

"Surest thing you know." Ballyhoo sniffed at the scent of cooking from the kitchen. He squinted his eyes. Then he stuck his head in the doorway of the room that was to be his. "Say, maybe I may have to be here for a month or two. My show's all balled up down South, an' I don't know just where I'll route it yet. I'm just lookin' this here town over. What time's th' scoffin?"

"The what? Oh, yes, the eating? Goodness, your circus terms are *so* interesting! Why, promptly at six. I

suppose you have some business to attend to before that time—being so busy and everything?"

"Yeh." Ballyhoo Bud's long legs were carrying him once more toward the stairway. "But I'll be back in time to put my nose in the feed bag. That's a swell joint, that room. I'm goin' to like it."

Saying which he went forth to wander about the town and size up its possibilities. But the possibilities did not shine forth in the necessity that they had presented an hour or so before. Ballyhoo Bud had found a new lead—and he liked it. Far easier is it to sit in a parlor and pay your board bill by conversation, than by making fake contracts and announcing the coming of a show that is never to appear. All of which was Ballyhoo Bud's line. Once upon a time the Great Southwest Triumvirate Circus, Hippodrome, and Mammoth Menagerie had managed to amble through a few States and Territories, displaying its one elephant, its two lions, and its blood-sweating behemoth, but that time was past now. Somewhere in some railroad yards, the yellow cars of the Great Southwest Triumvirate were rotting away. Somewhere the one elephant trumpeted and squealed. Somewhere the lions roared—but Ballyhoo Bud did not know the whereabouts. Nor did he care. For, being the agent for a show that does not exist is far easier than being the agent of a show in the flesh and blood. And Ballyhoo Bud in reality had never been much else than a side-show spieler in his life—until one day, when he had found a package of passes and a pad of contracts, thrown out of the treasury wagon of the Great Triumvirate as the sheriff searched for cash.

Therefore, the possibilities of Hebecker did not impress Ballyhoo Bud particularly as he strolled about the streets. At last he turned, and retraced his steps to the boarding house. There were other persons on the porch now—while from within there once more sounded the banging of the piano and the high-scraping notes of Geraldina's voice, as she reached for the vocal ceiling. Ballyhoo Bud grinned, cramped himself into a chair, then leaned toward the town mail carrier in the chair beside him.

"Some warbler, eh, kid?" he asked. The mail carrier laughed.

"The only thing that makes up for it is good food," he answered. "She ought to go to New York."

"She ought to go somewhere." Ballyhoo stared out into the street. "She says this here town ain't interestin' enough."

"You're a new boarder, then?" The mail carrier leaned forward to shake hands. "I knew you were. She tells that to everybody. What she keeps this boarding house for is more than I can see. Maybe she hopes somebody'll come along some day and carry her away. That's about the only thing I can see that'd keep her at it."

"Why—don't she have to run the place?" Ballyhoo Bud raised his voice a bit above the screeching from inside.

The mail carrier waved a hand. "I should say not. She loses on the blamed place every week. Why, she's got money."

"Huh?" The Adam's apple in Ballyhoo Bud's neck bobbed suddenly. He craned his head forward. "Money? How much?"

"Fifty thousand."

"Fifty what?"

"Thousand. And she runs this rooming house. Say, if I had fifty thousand dollars, I'd be running up and down that big white-way place in New York, giving bell boys dollar tips. What she needs more than anybody else is a husband that'll cut out this screeching and make her stop readin' these lord-and-lady books. Did she pull that on you, too?"

"That what?"

"About the romance there is in the world, and all that stuff, and about how it passed Hebecker up? No? Then you've got it coming to you. What I think the old girl needs is somebody to love her—but there ain't anybody around here that's got the strength and moral fabric."

"Not for fifty thousand dollars?" Ballyhoo Bud untangled his legs and wiggled a foot. "Say-y-y-y-y-y-y, for fifty thousand dollars I'd——"

It was the clanging of a bell from the back end of the house that stopped the conversation. Inward went Ballyhoo Bud, his eyes bulging slightly, his appetite gone. Fifty thousand dollars! Fifty thousand dollars waiting for a man with a heart full of love.

Hazily he felt himself introduced around. Dully he took his seat and fumbled through the meal. Then out into the air he went, to walk the quiet streets beneath the wide-spreading maples, and to stare at the stars between the low-hanging branches.

"Fifty thousand beans!" he gasped at last, as he stumbled along. "Fifty thousand beans—for life. Oh, it ain't done! Fifty thousand beans layin' around waitin' for a guy with a heart full o' affection! Bally," he said suddenly, and stopped in his walking, "I see where you're goin' chasin' after that little bird called love!"

And an hour afterward, Ballyhoo Bud was seated in the parlor of Miss Geraldina Perkins' boarding house, his long arms waving, his tousled head shot forward, telling a wide-eyed landlady of the wonders of the circus world. Also, he looked at the family album and sat silent as Miss Geraldina Perkins read to him from "Hearts Aflame; or, The Poor Shoemaker's Daughter."

"That's swell junk," he announced during a breathing spell. "I'm sure strong on this here romance stuff, ain't you?"

"I just love it!" Geraldina leaned forward in her chair. "But, oh, goodness! How disgusted I get in this town! They just don't seem to have any souls. They just don't think about anything except three meals a day and a place to sleep. I——"

Ballyhoo Bud, of the late-lamented Great Triumvirate, rose. He stretched his legs. He coughed slightly.

"Lady," he said softly, "let's walk in th' moonlight!"

And so it was that Ballyhoo's plans for the imaginary bringing of an imaginary show to Hebecker were mentioned less and less. Bally was too busy with other things, such as sitting in the parlor o' afternoons, while Miss Geraldina Perkins sang to him and punished the piano, or read from a stack of novels that leaned against the wall in a corner of the room. Also, there were more walks to be taken in the moonlight and more conversation to take the place of the mention of a board bill. At mealtimes the boarders looked wonderingly at Ballyhoo Bud and the heapings of food that he received—but they talked about it later. As for Ballyhoo himself, he cheerfully would have indulged. For Ballyhoo Bud was not in the slightest temperamental.

Ten days—two weeks, and Ballyhoo Bud awoke to the realization that of his hoard two dollars were left. Slowly he walked around town, his hands deep in his pockets, his neck cramped turtle-like in his collar. Then, suddenly, he turned.

"If I ain't filled her full o' guff now, I never will," he confided to himself. "I might as well bust open with things now, an' have it over."

He hurried forward. Up the steps of the boarding house he scrambled, and through the screen door. From the parlor there came again the sound of the banging piano. Ballyhoo Bud jerked off his hat and crumpled it in his hands. He tousled his hair a trifle

more. Then, suddenly, he shot for the parlor.

"Geraldina!" he called hoarsely.

Two hands thumped the piano in one grand discord. Geraldina turned, then shrieked a romantic little shriek. Her hands went into the air.

"Ferdinand! Whatever on earth is the matter?"

But Ferdinand did not answer for a moment. Instead he merely stood there and stared, his tousled hair falling over his eyes, his hands grasping the hat they crushed tighter and tighter. At last his lips parted, and he croaked something unintelligible. Geraldina Perkins, her hands clutched tragically by her sides, just as hands were always clutched in the romantic novels, waited, then moved closer.

"Ferdinand," she commanded again. "What is it? What is it?"

Ferdinand Budsworth rolled his eyes.

"Ruin!" he gasped.

"Ruin?"

"Yeh—ruin. Th' show's went busted."

"The show—oh, Ferdinand!" She came forward. She laid her hands on his breast, then drew away. "Oh, Ferdinand!" she repeated.

As for Ferdinand, he did not know just exactly what to do then. In fact, he had not planned beyond the simple announcement that the show had gone broke. So, for another moment, he merely stood there and gulped. Then, with a brilliant thought, he unraveled his long legs, strode forward, and sank upon the settee.

"An' me with all my dreams, too!" he croaked. "With all my dreams!"

"Dreams?" A plumping sound, and Geraldina had gone to the floor beside him. "What dreams——"

"And all my money! For years and years I'd saved, just watchin' an' waitin' for a thing like's bobbed up in my life here in the last two weeks—plannin' an' dopin' it all out, an' just stallin' around waitin' for th' dame t' bob up, an' then this here slams me in th' chest! Oh, it ain't right!" Ballyhoo Bud was wringing his hands, hero fashion. "It ain't right. It's a dirty trick, that's what!"

Her hands caught his, and Ballyhoo Bud turned his head that he might give a good, long wink. Things were progressing beautifully.

"And your money's gone—every bit of it?"

"Say, kid, honest," and Ballyhoo Bud turned a pitiful face toward her, "I ain't got kale enough t' pay my board bill. All these here years, I've been stallin' along, framin' for th' day when I could find a dame that I'd fall for, an' then I was goin' t' buy th' little rose-covered cottage an' all that junk, an' settle down. An' then, just when things is crackin' right, bingo, up she bobs, an' I'm laid out like I'd been hit with a meat ax. Listen, did you get me on that stuff? I ain't got kale enough t' pay my board bill!"

"We won't worry over that. Oh, Ferdinand, I'm so sorry, so sorry!" All of which came in dramatic-school tones. Ballyhoo Bud raised a hand, waved it in the air, then sent it clawing through his tousled locks.

"An' me"—Ballyhoo's voice became pitiable—"waitin' an' plannin' an' prayin' for th' day when I could come in here an' spill th' beans an' ask yuh t' marry me! All th' time——"

"Marry you?" Again there came a little shriek, a shriek of happy surprise. "Why, Ferdinand!"

And Ferdinand turned quickly, to stretch forth his lank arms and gather her to him.

"On th' square, kid," he burst forth, "I'm nuts over yuh. I'm bugs over yuh. Take yuh away from me an' I'm dead from th' feet up! Listen, can't we make it—huh? Can't we pull off this little thing an' do th' double stunt for th' rest of our lives—— Oh-h-h-h-h!"

he burst out suddenly, and turned. "What's th' use? Me without a red bean to my name——"

"It isn't that." Geraldina had turned away also. "I've got plenty of money, Ferdinand——"

"Yeh?" Ballyhoo Bud turned quickly. "Yeh——"

"But someway——"

"Yeh, I'm gettin' you, kid. I'm——"

"But, someway, you don't strike the proper chord, Ferdinand. The man who wins me"—and Geraldina's voice had once more gone into the drama form—"must do something romantic!"

"Ain't I done it?" Ballyhoo Bud became suddenly pettish. "Ain't I lost everything I had? Ain't that romantic enough?"

"But anybody can do that, Ferdinand. Besides"—she put a finger thoughtfully to her lips—"you didn't do that because you loved me. You——"

"Oh, didn't I?" Then Ballyhoo suddenly checked his remarks. "No, I didn't. I was savin' an' savin' t' give you a good home, not knowin' you had a cent on earth. An' I can't help it, can I, cause th' show goes broke—an' wipes me out? Listen, kid, won't you —won't you——"

She clasped her hands, and walked to the window.

"But there's something in my heart that just cries for romance——" And this time all of the make-believe emotional had left the voice. "You don't know how it is. All my life I've just been fed on it—people have even said I was foolish, and laughed at me and that sort of thing. I've known it. But I couldn't help it—with something inside here just calling out for romance —romance—romance! Won't you do something for me"—the drama had returned—"won't you—won't you?"

A tall, lanky figure rose from the plush-covered settee. It waved its arms.

. "Oh, all right," he grumbled. "You want romance. Then I'll pull a real one!"

"What, Ferdinand?" She was beside him again. Ballyhoo Bud, of the late-lamented Great Southwest Triumvirate Circus, Hippodrome, and Mammoth Menagerie, turned pettishly.

"How d' I know?" he asked, as he stalked out of the room. "Gimme time t' frame somethin', will you?"

Saying which, he jammed his hat over his eyes, rammed his way through the screen door, and plunked heavily down the street. Before a hardware store, he stopped to look at a display of shotguns, rifles, revolvers, and dirk knives. He rubbed his sharp chin and scratched his head.

"Maybe she wants me t' cut her heart out or somethin' of th' kind," he grumbled. "I'd do it—for that fifty thousand!"

Then he went on again, to amble about the sidewalks, to stare in the windows, and finally to enter the lobby of the little hotel, and sink into one of the chairs there. Idly he reached for the two days' old Chicago newspaper. Lazily he scanned the headlines. Suddenly his glance centered on a few lines near the bottom of the page—and he pulled the print closer to him:

> Max Jones, thirty-three, committed suicide last night in his room at No. 1122 Fourth Street, by inhaling gas. Disappointment in love was the reason given in a note.

That was all, but it sent a strange light glimmering into the eyes of Ballyhoo Bud, of the late-lamented Great Southwest. He jammed the paper into a pocket. Then he rose and shambled across the street to a doctor's office.

"Doc," he announced, as he stuck his head in the door, "I ain't here to give you no money for treatin' me, or anythin' of th' kind. I'm here t' get helped out on some trouble. Looky here; see this article in th' paper about Max Jones? Well, Max is a friend o' mine,

an' I got a hunch he didn't commit no suicide."

"That so. What's the reason?"

"Just this here. Max never was in love with nobody. An' I'm a-bettin' somebody killed him an' put that note there. Why, Max wouldn't——"

The physician laughed.

"You're off there, friend. If any one was going to kill him, they would have used something besides gas. He could have gotten out of the room any time he wanted to——"

"That so?"

"Why, certainly. It takes a good while for gas to overcome anybody."

"Yeh? Then I suppose a guy's conscious right up to pretty near when he keels over, huh?"

"That's just about it."

"And if he'd yelled for help or groaned or somethin' just about when he started to go under, they could've got him out an' pulled him through, huh?"

"Sure." The doctor laughed. "Nope, your friend deliberately went the route. That's——"

"Doc, what's the idea in this gas thing—it just sort o' dozes you off, huh?"

"That's it."

"An' any time before the big thing happens, you're all right if they pull you out?"

"Correct."

Ballyhoo Bud looked at his paper again.

"I guess that's all there is to it then," he answered dolefully. "That sure busts me up. I never thought Max was that kind of a guy. Thanks, doc."

But when he had gained the street again, Ballyhoo Bud suddenly forgot the great solicitude and care he had held for his dear friend, Max. In fact, he threw the paper in the gutter, and, turning, rushed for the boarding house. For in the mind of Ballyhoo Bud was incubating a great idea.

His face assumed a look of deep dejection—a rehearsal in advance. He turned from the sidewalk, his shoulders sunk forward, his neck scalloped deep in his collar. Thumpily he ascended the steps of the boarding-house veranda, he banged open the door, he started up the stairs. From the parlor there came a swishing sound of skirts. Then a voice:

"Ferdinand!"

But Ballyhoo Bud merely paused on the stairs, turned, gazed dolefully downward, and lifted a hand for silence. Then he went on.

In his room, he closed the door. His hand touched the key to lock it—then suddenly dropped.

"Nope," came musingly. "I might get too far over th' line t' open it myself. Better leave 'er open." Then he grinned and winked downward. "Ol' girl wants romance, huh? Well, she'll get it—thick'n heavy! Be-e-lieve me!"

Saying which, he removed his collar and shoes, and piled the pillows of the bed high for comfort. Then he rummaged through the old-fashioned writing desk for a pencil and paper. For a long time he sat, with the end of his pencil to his tongue, thinking. Then he winked at himself in the mirror and began his missive:

DEAREST GERALDINA: What's the use of trying to make good? You don't love me. I do this after thinking it over a long time. I've turned on the gas. Good-by forever, my loved one. FERDINAND.

He read the note several times. Then he wrote three or four others, and tore them up. Succinct and to the point—that was the thing. If there was anything further to say, it could be said after Geraldina Perkins had heard his groans, rushed to his help, saved his life, and promised to be his forever.

"Th' ol' girl wants romance, huh?" Ballyhoo Bud asked again. "Well, she's goin' to get it in gobs. Gosh, it's goin' t' be hot in here with them windows down. But they got to come down. You can't kill yourself proper

with gas with th' windows up. Guess I'll take off my shirt."

Which he did. And then, with every window jammed tight to its frame, Ballyhoo Bud winked again, very slowly, craned his long neck forward, looked at himself in the mirror—and turned on the gas. After which he made himself comfortable on the bed and looked at the ceiling.

From below there came again the clanging of the piano, plaintive and soft. Ballyhoo Bud squinted his eyes at a spot on the ceiling, thought everything over—and then suddenly arose and turned off the spigot. It wouldn't do to let out a series of perfectly good groans with that piano going. She wouldn't hear.

And so Ballyhoo Bud, his long arms dangling between his knees, opened a window and sat on the side of the bed—waiting. A half hour, and the piano stopped. Ballyhoo Bud rose and grunted peevishly.

"Time she was doin' it," he grumbled, "bangin' that ol' groan box down there, an' me up here tryin' t' pull off a suicide! Now, f'r th' love o' Mike, keep still an' let me have some romance. Come on back down, window!"

Once more heat and stuffiness. Once more the whistling sound of the gas, as it wheezed out of the jet. Once more Ballyhoo Bud stretched himself on the bed and looked at the spots of the ceiling.

A minute. Two. Three. A slight, cutting something found its way into his nostrils. He sneezed, and then, rolling over, buried his head in the pillows. Following which he came into the open again. One can't blow oneself up with gas if one isn't inhaling it. The sharp odor became more apparent. Ballyhoo Bud opened his eyes very wide, and once more went over his conversation with the doctor.

"Th' guy says to pull off a groan when you're nearly out for th' count," he repeated. "Tain't time yet. But when I do groan—it's goin' to be some groans. Specially if that tin pan downstairs starts again."

But the tin pan was silent. The air grew heavier. Ballyhoo Bud felt a certain pleasurable, drowsy feeling creeping over him. But he wasn't nearly unconscious. In fact, he could think of a lot of things—principally that he wanted a cigarette.

Nor was it unusual. Ballyhoo Bud always went to sleep on a cigarette. Dully he cast it over in his mind—cigarettes and suicide. Hazily he raised a hand and dropped it again. The world felt splendid—soothing and soft and beautiful. But still he wanted that cigarette.

His eyes closed, then opened. A long, lean arm traveled slowly through the air and fumbled in the pockets of his coat, on the back of a chair against the bed. Aimlessly he jabbed the cigarette at his mouth—and struck an eye. He tried again, and succeeded. Then, with lotus-leaf lassitude, he reached once more into the pocket of his coat and brought forth a match. Aimlessly he scratched it on the wall——

Something happened. Something with red streaks in it, and reverberations and the tearing of timbers and the rending of boards, accompanied by the crashing and smashing of glass. High into the air traveled Ballyhoo Bud, then downward, while about him there scurried and flashed more streaks of red and yellow and blue, more thunder and more lightning. His eyes opened wide—he whirled in the air—then dropped through a hole in the floor, with the bed on top of him, while about him there streamed plaster and boards and laths and pieces of window and furniture and bits of chinaware. From away off somewhere, Ballyhoo Bud heard some one screeching wildly. He struggled feebly, he stuck out his head from beneath the bed, which lay atop him—then the world grew sud-

denly dark, as a settling bureau skidded to rest upon his left ear.

A moment of unconsciousness, then the long neck craned again. Wildly the arms fished here and there. He gurgled. From without there had come the clanging of bells, the shouting of men, the screeching and screams of women. Ballyhoo rolled to his back. Then he, too, yelped, a bit louder than any one.

The shouts came closer. There sounded the swishing of water, and Ballyhoo Bud suddenly found himself trying to swim out from beneath the bed, as a fire hose threw its entire force upon him. Louder than ever he gurgled. Wide went his mouth, to close just as quickly, upon a mixed mass of splinters, water, and plaster. He puffed. He chortled. Then, through the plaster and water, he yelped louder than ever.

A sudden movement of the bed, and he looked up into the face of a frowning fireman. Again he waved his long arms. Again he attempted to talk through the mouthful of plaster.

"Ge' me ou'a here!" he blubbered. "I'm drow'in'—I'm——"

The fireman turned and bawled an order, inadvertently allowing his hose to once more send its splattering stream upon the kicking, yelping form of Ballyhoo Bud. Out of the maze figures rushed forward—Ballyhoo felt himself lifted and carried forth. A moment more, and he was in the open, while about him there gathered firemen, policemen, and half the population of Hebecker. There came a wailing sound—then a voice:

"Oh—please—please—is he dead?"

Ballyhoo Bud looked up.

"Dead?" he asked angrily, as he stared into the wild-eyed face of Geraldina Perkins. "Dead not'in'. Ge' me somethin' to ge' this plaster ou' my mou'!"

A swabbing handkerchief soaked in water was given him. Ballyhoo Bud blinked and sat up. Gingerly he spat out the remaining bits of plaster.

"Get these here people away," he ordered. "Think I want t' talk before them. Think I——"

"Looky here!" It was a voice in the crowd, as he bent forward and picked up a piece of paper that had fluttered from the wreckage. "Here's the reason for this thing. This fellow turned on the gas."

"The gas?" It was a shriek from the distracted Miss Perkins. "Ferdinand!" She turned, and her hands were on her hips. Also, about the mouth had returned those austere little lines that Ballyhoo Bud had noticed once before. "Ferdinand! Did you turn on the gas?"

Ballyhoo Bud put on his most doleful look.

"Yeh," he answered, and stared at the ground.

"What for?"

"What for?" Ballyhoo Bud looked up peevishly. " 'Cause I wanted to die. Read th' note—it tells everything."

"Give me that note!" There was a tone in the voice that Ballyhoo Bud had never heard before. Hastily Miss Geraldina Perkins swept forward. She seized the bit of paper, and held it close before her eyes. Then she turned to the sprawling figure of Ballyhoo Bud on the ground. "Well, why didn't you finish it up?" she asked acidly. "Instead of this mess. Look at this house! Look at me! Where on earth am I going to serve supper to-night, I'd like to know? Where am I——"

"You wanted romance, didn't you?" Ballyhoo Bud looked into the distance. "There it is. I'm done."

"You're done, eh?" It was a new voice, coarse and masculine. "Jes' lemme into this here argument a minute. I be th' sher-iff," he announced, as he came closer. "Now, young feller, how'd this explosion happen?"

"How'd it happen?" There was

more peevishness than ever in the voice of Ballyhoo Bud, as he looked upward. "How'd I know how it happened? All I know is that I got tired o' livin' an' turned on th' gas. Then I thought maybe I'd like a cigarette before I bumped off, an' so I struck a match an'——"

"He struck a match!" It was the voice of Geraldina Perkins, high and screeching. "Did you hear him? He struck a match!"

Ballyhoo Bud stared wildly and stirred somewhat in the mud puddle that had surrounded him.

"Gosh!" he gasped. "That never hit me! I never thought about——"

"Wait a minnit there, afore you start makin' excuses." It was the voice of the sheriff again. "You was tryin' to commit suicide, I reckon?"

"What d' you think I was doin'—learnin' to swim?" The thoughts of water and mud puddles kept reverting to Ballyhoo's brain. The sheriff leaned closer.

"Went at it deliberately, huh?"

"Yes, I went at it deliberately."

"With malice aforethought?"

"Aw, nix on that stuff, an' get me out o' this mud puddle. Yeh, with malice aforethought."

The sheriff stroked his beard.

"That settles it, I reckon. Section 17, article 5, revised ordinances o' th' town an' county o' Hebecker. Malicious an' deliberate destruction o' property. What'd you say, young feller, about wantin' t' get out o' that mud puddle? Jest in a minute—an' I'll show you th' finest an' neatest an' cleanest jail you ever sot your foot in. Th' food ain't nothin' to brag about, like you've been gettin' here at Miss Geraldina's, but——"

Ballyhoo Bud looked upward, into the grim, angry face of the landlady with the fifty thousand, then into the face of the sheriff.

"Choke off that chatter, will yuh?" he asked pettishly. "What d' you think y' are, a phoneygraph?"

## WHY MARK TWAIN PLAYED

THE recent death of Maurice Vignaux, champion billiardist, brings to mind a memorable game he once played with Mark Twain. Vignaux was a wonderful player, whose fame preceded him from Paris, and who afterward accomplished some record runs in this country which stand unbeaten to-day. For many years he conducted a billiard room in Broadway which was a popular place of resort for those interested in the sport. One morning, early, Mark Twain, out for one of his favorite strolls about the city, dropped into the rooms, and found Vignaux there alone.

"Good morning, Mr. Clemens! Feel like playing a game?" asked Vignaux.

Mark nodded, and, taking off hat and coat, selected a cue from the rack and chalked it carefully. Then he and Vignaux strung for the lead. Vignaux won first shot, and Mark put some more chalk on the tip of his cue.

It was three-ball-cushion carom. Vignaux made the first shot, a difficult draw, following it with a round-the-table and then a massé. He made the three points with the ease of a master, and kept on playing, while Mark Twain, cue in hand and chalk in the other, watched.

Vignaux never missed, but continued to make caroms until he had run the game out. Twain had not had a shot.

"Too bad!" laughed Vignaux. "I've won the game. Will you play another?"

"No, thank you," replied Mark philosophically, replacing his cue in the rack. "I only played that one for practice."

# The Moon-Mined

By Frank Blighton

*Author of "Reverse English," Etc.*

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST PART

With a bag of mysterious moon-mined black sand from the Pacific slope, old Joe Stokes, with his wife and his twenty-year-old daughter Mary, comes to New York. He interviews Billy Nevins and Allyn Devore, brokers, telling them that the sand is a sample of a ridge worth millions. The sand is given to Charlie Arbuckle, chemist, for analysis, and he declares that it is rich in gold and tungsten values. Nevins and Devore advance five hundred dollars option, but war breaks out in Europe and they have to drop out for lack of ready cash. Arbuckle introduces Joe Stokes to Leo Descher of Freiburg, Germany, who is looking for an investment. Descher offers a million dollars and takes out option for thirty days, advancing twenty-five hundred dollars on the understanding that Arbuckle is to go with Joe to the claim and ship a carload of the sand to Perth Amboy. At the Occidental Trust Company Descher puts one copy of the option in a box in the safe-deposit vault and gives the other copy to Stokes. The time lock on the box is set for thirty days in advance, August 19, at 10 o'clock. Arbuckle loans Stokes a thousand dollars to provide for his wife and daughter, and the two start for the Pacific coast. On the train their coats, which they have placed on the rack, take fire, but a porter extinguishes the blaze before much damage is done.

(*In Two Parts—Part Two*)

## CHAPTER VII.

AMBUSHED.

THE incident of the clothing taking fire was forgotten by Arbuckle after they left Chicago.

The old man with whom he was making his first transcontinental trip was a fascinating traveling companion. The country over which they were swiftly speeding evoked anecdote after anecdote from him, told with the peculiar charm of one who had personally observed the development of the West over a period of many years.

What was more, Arbuckle began to realize the thorough knowledge which the old miner possessed regarding the mineral resources of the country. On the subject of tungsten he was especially well informed.

"I'd 'a' gone by the Santa Fe 'nd detoured down in Arizony, jest to show you somethin', if we wasn't so pressed for time," averred Uncle Joe the morning of the fourth day, as they were slipping down the western slope of the Sierras toward San Francisco.

"There's traces o' tungsten all over that State, but no sech percentages as you found in my sand. About five miles north of Dragoon, a couple of year ago, they got a few tones of hübernite from some dry placers, while a-siftin' fer gold; over to Arivaca they got a little 'nd sent it from Calabasas Junction, to Denver, fer millin'. About thirty-five miles, more or less, from Phoenix, at a place called Cave Creek, there's some black wolframite that carries tungsten 'n' malachite. About forty miles farther along, in the tailin's of the old Tiptop Mine, when a feller was workin' 'em for silver, he run acrost some more tungsten. Up to a place called Oracle, about forty miles north of Tucson, in

what they call the Old Hat district, where Buffalo Bill Cody is gougin' out gold ore, they found traces of tungsten in scheelite. But what they got altogether from all o' these places, young feller, hain't a pinch o' snuff to what I'll show Mr. Descher before them thirty days is up."

Then Uncle Joe switched to the workings in Jawbone Valley in California.

Suddenly he ceased to speak. He was staring at the figure of a man who had just entered their Pullman. The newcomer was a red-faced, hard-visaged man who swaggered as he walked past them. Arbuckle noted that he was pockmarked, and he wore his slouch hat so low down on his forehead that the brim of it hid his eyes.

Without either explanation or apology, the old miner broke off in the midst of his narrative, nor did he resume. On the contrary, his loquacity seemed to have been quenched by the sight of the man who had stalked through the Pullman, but concerning whom he vouchsafed no explanation whatever.

Only when San Francisco was reached, some four hours later, did he open his mouth.

"We'll take the boat to Sausalito, 'nd from thar we'll dig right up to where I'm aimin' fer," said he.

At Sausalito, they boarded a train for the north. The following morning they debouched from a very dirty day coach on the narrow-gauge line at Cazadero. Here Joe Stokes, whose good humor seemed to have partially returned, smiled on Charlie Arbuckle most paternally.

"Son, kin ye ride?"

"I can try."

"Well, we hit the grit right smart, fr'm now on. To where I'm aimin' to go is some jaunt."

The prediction was verified.

Mounted on two dependable riding animals and followed by two more carrying the camp equipment and assay outfit, they rode up the crest of a range of heavily wooded hills that afternoon.

At night they pitched camp in the crotch of a marvelous bit of mountain scenery, and Charlie Arbuckle almost forgot his saddle soreness in the sublimity of the view below them to the west.

Twenty miles or more beyond lay the Pacific Ocean. From their lofty elevation, its limitless expanse was visible—a sea of turquoise touched with fire celestial as the sun sank behind its western rim.

Joe Stokes seemed a part of the picture. His air of lassitude and indifference was gone; he stepped briskly hither and yon with an elasticity that seemed incongruous; he gathered firewood, picketed horses, boiled coffee, and even made bread—all in an astonishingly short space of time.

He laughed heartily at Arbuckle's fatigue when their meal had ended.

"Hit your blankets, son," he gibed. "We'll be out afore you think you've had time to git well started to sleep."

Had he been less drowsy when roused, Arbuckle would have reveled in the dawn. Joe Stokes was remorseless, however, forcing his companion to breakfast and urging him to drink plenty of coffee.

They were off at a brisk trot, descending the western slopes of the hills they had climbed the day before with sunrise. It was nearly noon when they ambled down the last declivity. Before them, screened slightly by a few eucalyptus trees, whose trunks bent inward before the unceasing trade winds, stretched the beach.

"Hurry, son," cried the old prospector, swinging agilely to the ground, "I've got suthin' queer I want to show you. Did you notice where the moon was last night?" demanded the old miner when the camp equipment had been unloaded and the horses were picketed.

"I'm afraid not. I don't even recall whether I pulled my blanket over me when I went to sleep, I was so exhausted."

"Well, I did, sonny. The moon's in her last quarter—dyin' like she always does. This here's the twenty-fifth day of August. Come on down to the beach with me."

"What has the moon to do with our errand?" asked Arbuckle.

"Sho, sonny, didn't Billy Nevins tell you what I told him?"

"I recall his mentioning the moon, but I thought he was kidding me. Billy likes to jolly people; it's a habit with him."

"Well, if it warn't fer the moon, you wouldn't be here. I told him that there was one place on the Pacific coast where the Japanese current alluz pitched up gray sand in the light o' the moon 'nd where the Japanese current alluz pitched up black sand in the dark o' the moon. See all that gray sand?"

Joe Stokes stretched his arm along the beach with a sweeping gesture. His companion nodded. As far as he could see it was all the same, an interminable stretch of the same neutral tint between the luxuriant verdure of the mountains at their backs and the blue of the sea beyond.

"We'll pitch camp," said the older man, after a long pause. "Then, to-night, I'm goin' to show you suthin' you never seen afore, sonny."

True to his word, Joe Stokes led the way back to the beach after the evening meal. The heavy breakers of the omnipotent Pacific were thudding much higher than in the afternoon, for the tide was coming in.

"Don't take too many chances, sonny," warned Stokes. "That there Japanese current's a treacherous thing. Onct, right on this same coast, a feller I knowed got ketched no higher 'n his ankles. He was swept around a p'int, 'nd if I hadn't had a boat 'nd been right thar, so to speak, waitin' fer him, no tellin' what'd happened."

Waving him back, the old miner walked cautiously down to the very edge of the booming surf, just as a foam-crested breaker shattered itself and slithered up on the beach. Stooping, he scooped up a handful of wet sand and retreated nimbly out of reach of the following wave. He came up the bank, the light of triumph dancing on his homely face.

Charlie Arbuckle looked down with awed eyes.

In the hands held out to him was sand, gray sand, but flecked with streaks of the same heavy, black, treasure-laden substance which he instantly recognized as like that which he had examined in his laboratory, three thousand miles away.

"In seven days more, sonny, there won't be ary bit o' gray sand on this here beach—it'll all be black. I'll keep this, 'nd to-morrer, after you test it, you'll see what Joe Stokes meant when he give that there sample to them brokers that went broke."

"But must we wait seven days?" demanded Arbuckle, annoyed at the thought of more delay.

"Shucks, sonny, don't you worry. Jest leave it all to your Uncle Joe. I'll show you more black sand to-morrer than you ever dreamed of. It piled right around that there point over thar"—he waved an explanatory arm toward a rocky promontory to the north—"in the dark of the moon, with the Japanese current, during a turrible storm from the southwest that shoved it away above high water. You jest get that there assay outfit of your'n ready, 'nd test out what I'll bring you. When you're satisfied, go over 'nd measure it yourself. Then we'll see about whether or not we'll wire Mr. Descher 'nd ship that carload to Perth Amboy."

Carefully depositing the precious specimen in a corner of their tent, Joe

Stokes rambled on, explaining how the deposit of black sand would increase as the light of the moon kept on waning.

Uncle Joe Stokes was sleeping peacefully at dawn. Arbuckle took advantage of his own wakefulness to set up the assay outfit and begin the first test. He was surprised at the richness of the sand. It ran as rich as the sample he had taken from Nevins & Devore in New York, and he hurriedly aroused the old miner to announce his result.

The ancient one received the news with a smile that seemed likely to twist his face out of shape permanently. While Arbuckle tried his hand at getting breakfast, Joe Stokes disappeared over the crest of the rocky promontory beyond. When he returned he carried a heavy canvas bag of black sand, unmixed with gray.

"After you see what's in this, I'll take you over 'nd show you the deposit I spoke about last night," he explained, as he started to eat. "Great heavens, son! I thought you was makin' biscuits! What'd you think you was doin' while I was out there—castin' pig iron?"

Arbuckle blushed like a girl at the gibe. Laboratory specialist that he was, there were parts of the science of chemistry with which he appeared singularly unfamiliar.

Grumbling and joshing, Joe Stokes threw away the biscuits and stirred up a batch of his own. The meal concluded and the animals located, they went over to the point, beyond which lay the treasure-trove. A steel tape line and a shovel were part of their outfit.

After several hours of active work, Arbuckle sat down on the sand and held his head in his hands. It could not be possible—yet his measurements of extent and depth at many places only confirmed his last figures. The deposit would easily equal a hundred thousand tons, if it did not considerably exceed that amount.

He was impatient for the assay tests. The holes which the other man had already made in gathering samples were easily visible on the wind-blown stretch when they first arrived.

For the balance of the day, hardly pausing for meals, Charlie Arbuckle worked fast and furiously.

It was nine o'clock at night when he finally stopped, through sheer exhaustion.

"I'm afraid Descher'll go crazy or conclude that I am, over this showing, if I report such fabulous figures, Mr. Stokes."

The old miner grinned.

"Cut 'em to twenty per cent of what they show. Wire him when we git back to Cazadero, while I'll git teams to haul in enough fer a car. We'll come back around by the road. It's some longer, but we gotta make that shipment—that is, if you're satisfied."

"Satisfied?" echoed the younger man. "Hurry up and let's get back to town or I'll go nutty before we start."

He turned wearily to his blankets, suddenly saddened at the thought of worshiping at the shrine of Mary Stokes —whose grandfather was unquestionably a multimillionaire, unless the science of metallurgy was a superstition unworthy of a moment's credence.

By hard riding, they reached Cazadero in ten hours next day. The animals were returned to their owners, the assay outfit boxed and left at the hotel against their return with the shipment of ore for Perth Amboy. The tent and camp equipment had been left at the beach for their return.

While Arbuckle sent off a long code telegram to Descher, Joe Stokes arranged for the teams to haul in the black sand. When the chemist returned from the telegraph office, he found the ancient one in conversation with another man, apparently almost as old and even more grizzled than any specimen of humanity he had yet encountered on the journey.

"Wait for me over to the hotel," directed Stokes.

"All right," said Arbuckle, as he sauntered away.

Eight wagons, each drawn by four horses, and with two men beside the teamsters, accompanied them back to the beach, after a night of rest.

The return trip was without incident. The wagons were quickly loaded, and the straining horses started back on the forty-mile stretch to the railroad, where a car had already been ordered for the shipment East.

With the forethought which had been so characteristic of him throughout the whole affair, Joe Stokes had hired two fresh saddle horses and a pack animal for Arbuckle and him to use in returning to Cazadero by the shorter mountain trail. These had been led behind the wagons on the trip out. When the last load had rumbled away, the old man swung into the saddle, signaling to Arbuckle to follow, and started at a brisk canter back over the ridge to where they had left their camping outfit.

Arbuckle was not surprised, at his first glimpse over the stretch of the beach after he had mounted the ridge, to perceive further evidences of the mysterious action of the Japanese current, in conjunction with the unlighted phase of the moon.

A pronounced discoloration was already visible along the entire length of the beach. He knew it immediately for the mysterious black sand. Everything was exactly as Joe Stokes had affirmed—the whole bizarre narrative had been verified with amazing exactitude from the first moment he had obtained the specimen from Nevins & Devore back in New York.

As he jogged down the other side of the promontory, trusting to the hill-bred animal he rode to pick its own path, Arbuckle fell into a reverie. The success which Joe Stokes had attained was very gratifying for more reasons than one. It not only confirmed his own expert judgment in ore values, but it would also enable the septuagenarian to provide for the two dependent women. Somehow, as the sweet face of Mary Stokes floated up in place of the rock-studded stretch down which he was riding, Arbuckle half wished the whole enterprise had not been achieved with such ridiculous ease. Had he been given a chance to distinguish himself, particularly in the way of rendering genuine service to Joe Stokes, perhaps the future might have afforded him at least a fighting chance for renewing his acquaintance with the miner's charming granddaughter.

Now, as a prospective heiress, Arbuckle felt that he could not try to cultivate her acquaintance, to say nothing of looking forward to a more tender and intimate relationship, without justly laying himself open to a suspicion of selfishness.

He rode gloomily on toward the camp, still a quarter of a mile distant. As he rounded the last clump of eucalyptus trees, a peremptory command rang in his ears.

Notwithstanding lack of previous experience in such matters, Charlie Arbuckle evinced no hesitancy in automatically assuming the proper attitude befitting the occasion. He elevated his hands as he had been bidden to do and stared blankly down into the gaping muzzle of the pistol held in the hand of a hard-visaged, thickset individual, whose red, pock-marked face was shadowed by a slouch hat drawn low upon his forehead.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### POCKMARKS, PISTOLS—AND BILLY PEEL.

"Git off'n that hoss!" commanded the man with the gun.

"Why?" quietly asked Arbuckle. "Is he your horse?"

The man ripped out a series of oaths, but Arbuckle, even with his blood turning to ice, refused to move. Also, the shock of his first surprise somewhat abated, he lowered his hands, folded them upon the pommel of his saddle, and looked the chap straight in the eye.

"My friend, I have never been introduced to you," resumed Arbuckle, matching the desperation of his position against the other's truculent manner, "and I'll trouble you to explain just what you intend to do—and why."

"Well, of all the gall!" exploded the man with the gun. "Who do you think you be, anyway?"

"I don't think," sharply replied Arbuckle. "I know. And you'll know, too, if you start any more monkey business in my vicinity. If I had a pistol, I'd do something besides talk."

There was a snaky, sinister flash from beneath the shadow of the slouch hat. It was the first intimation to the young metallurgist that the menacing figure before him really possessed eyes.

"I'm a deppity sheruff," returned the other, obviously repressing his anger. "If you aim to pull a gun, I'll fill you so full of lead that you'll be good at any smelter in the State. Git off'n that hoss!"

"Not yet," sturdily returned Arbuckle, suddenly recalling where he had first seen the man on the ground. "There'll be time enough to dismount when you've shown your warrant for my arrest. And, if I'm not mistaken, you have no warrant. If you had one, why did you order me to throw up my hands, instead of informing me at first you were an officer."

The pock-marked individual flipped back the lapel of his coat with his free hand. The star of office the motion revealed gave him a further advantage, as the fellow continued:

"Th' warrant's up to Cazadero, 'er will be, when we get back. Nobuddy's goin' to swear out a warrant till they got evidence that you fellers hev been stealin' ore from another man's claim, be they?"

"Stealing?" echoed Arbuckle.

"That's the word I used," grimly retorted the deputy. "It ain't a nice word, sometimes. But it fits you 'nd this other feller that's workin' with you."

Arbuckle dismounted. His surprise left him speechless. Then he remembered that he had taken everything for granted so far, regarding the ownership of the deposit of black sand. Assuming that it had been the property of Joseph Stokes, he had followed blindly the old man's lead.

The officer passed a hand tentatively over his person in search of a weapon. Finding none, he replaced his own.

"Go on over to the tent!" he directed. "We're goin' back to Cazadero after I git your pardner."

It was on the tip of Arbuckle's tongue to ask why, since Joe Stokes had been ahead of him, he had not been arrested first, but he checked the impulse.

Something was wrong.

If Joe Stokes had, after all of Arbuckle's unselfish effort in the old miner's behalf, deliberately deceived him and led him into an invidious position, it would behoove him to proceed with more caution from now on than he had thus far exhibited.

If the officer was speaking the truth, Arbuckle was also very lucky not to have been shot down for the temerity he had already shown.

As they came through the grove of eucalyptus into the clearing where the tent still stood alongside the spring which had determined their choice of location, another surprise awaited Arbuckle.

Ambling contentedly to and fro in the inclosure, munching the grass which here grew luxuriantly, the horse which Joe Stokes had been riding was pick-

eted. The saddle and bridle lay on the ground by the tent flap.

The next instant, and before the pock-marked man could draw his pistol, the ancient one himself stepped into view, with another ready weapon focused in their direction.

That was quite enough for Arbuckle.

At the identical moment of the report from the weapon in Joe Stokes' hand, he threw himself flat on the ground. The "ping" of the passing bullet indicated that it was no moving-picture rehearsal which was transpiring. A shot from the deputy sheriff echoed that of Joe Stokes.

Had Arbuckle dared to move he would have seen the officer making cover in the most approved fashion, and his antagonist likewise engaged.

The interchange of pistol fire grew rapid, died away, and was resumed. With the rush of feet past him, Arbuckle took heart of grace sufficient to sit erect.

Another surprise greeted him. Joe Stokes, despite his seventy-odd years, was legging it along the beach as desperately as any younger outlaw ever ran in the history of the West. Pursuing him was the deputy sheriff. But, despite the heavy handicap of the years, the older man gained ground until the ocean itself barred his way.

Arbuckle covered his eyes with his hands that he might not see the last act of the tragedy. The echo of another pistol shot came more faintly to his ears. There was no reply. He rose, sick at heart, and staggered, rather than walked, down to the edge of the surf, where the pock-marked man was standing alone.

The next breaker that boiled up cast a dark object at Arbuckle's feet.

It was the out-of-fashion, battered derby which Uncle Joe Stokes had worn. As he stooped to recover the old hat, Arbuckle remembered, with a pang that left him more nauseated than anything which had hitherto occurred since riding over the ridge, that he had promised Mary Stokes to protect her grandfather, at all hazards, on the trip West.

Far out in the relentless waves which eddied and thundered around the promontory, he fancied he could descry a figure. Then the current whirled it out of view behind the rocky point.

Dimly, as if from some mysterious, invisible source, Arbuckle seemed to hear the aged miner speaking:

"——a feller I knowed onct was ketched no higher'n his ankles, 'nd swept around a p'int——"

Arbuckle, clutching at the derby, stared stupidly down at the swirl of sand which the waves were casting up at his feet. And the hue of it was no less black than the despair which was smothering his soul.

He roused from his stupor only when the pock-marked deputy sheriff ordered him to return to the camp site.

"That danged old fool might have knowed better'n to run up agin' the law," said the officer. "And he shot at me fust—you know that, don't you?"

"I was too frightened and confused to be sure of anything," equivocated the chemist. "But who was it charged us with stealing this ore?"

"Why, this here property's located in the name of a feller called Gundaker," replied the officer. "My name's Jim Wilder. You're Mr. Arbuckle, hain't ye?"

"Yes."

"Well, what bizness had you 'nd old Joe Stokes to be shovelin' up this here sand 'nd shippin' it to Cazadero?"

"As an officer," retorted Arbuckle, with a sudden flame of resentment, as he realized that this offensive individual had been primarily responsible for a frightful tragedy, "your functions are executive, I take it, Mr. Wilder—that is, you are empowered to make arrests. I do not understand that you have any

legal authority to question me or otherwise act in a judicial capacity. If there is, as you have said, a warrant for me in Cazadero, you have only one duty to perform."

The officer glanced curiously at him, without replying. After securing the horses, he directed his prisoner to mount and ride ahead of him along the mountain trail. The journey, pregnant as every foot of the road was with thoughts of Joe Stokes and the terrible ending to the enterprise in which the old miner was engaged, became a remorseful nightmare to Arbuckle.

As the miles dribbled behind them, in proportion grew the feeling of resentment which he bore toward the pock-marked officer. That individual rode with an assumption of carelessness which did not deceive Arbuckle in the least. He knew that at the least sign of hostility the six-gun which the other wore in his waistband, Western fashion, would belch its leaden messenger in his direction.

In spite of it all, Arbuckle could scarcely refrain from leaping at Wilder's throat when they dismounted, just before daybreak, at the jail door in Cazadero. All doubt as to the officer's genuine character vanished when he produced the key from his pocket. Inside, Wilder escorted the metallurgist to a cell, locked him in, and left after locking the outer door.

Not a word had passed between the two men. Arbuckle wondered whether it was his own fantastic imagination, or whether or not Wilder appeared to be somewhat uneasy over the other phase of the affair—the one which had terminated in the mysterious Japanese current sweeping the body of Joe Stokes out into the maw of the Pacific—the very fate against which the old miner had so sedulously warned his companion.

He could not sleep after what had happened. A substantial breakfast was provided for him, and, later on, Wilder escorted him before a justice of the peace, who held him to appear before the grand jury in five thousand dollars bail on a charge of larceny of ore from "a certain piece of mineral ground located by one George Gundaker."

Arbuckle asked for a lawyer, and one came. The first look which the prisoner gave him settled the question of a retainer. The chemist would not have permitted him to appear in his behalf if the man had paid Arbuckle for the privilege.

He did manage, after a long argument, to send a telegram to Leo Descher, telling him of his plight and requesting his aid. When the third day of his imprisonment arrived, and no reply had been received, he hotly accused Wilder of suppressing the message. That official glanced at him again, this time more curiously than before, and went out apparently in deep perplexity —scratching his head as if some element of the affair was utterly beyond his comprehension.

By the end of the week, Arbuckle was frantic. It was the twelfth day since he had first arrived in Cazadero and the sixteenth since leaving New York. To add to his feeling of hopeless dejection, another prisoner who had been committed for twenty-four hours for drunkenness informed him that the grand jury would not meet until the following January.

"They do say they got you 'nd that old fox Joe Stokes dead to rights," he added, with a cunning leer.

"It is a conspiracy of some sort," replied Arbuckle hotly. "I don't know who is back of it, but if Joe Stokes were here, he'd know. I don't care what any one says about that man—he was on the level all the way. Everything is against him, I'll admit, but I know that no squarer man ever drew the breath of life than he. And he was murdered—by that pock-marked

fiend, who looks as if he ought to have been hanged himself twenty years ago."

The other man remained unmoved. A little later, however, he offered to share the last of his tobacco with Arbuckle. Likewise, when released the following morning, he pointed straight across the street and into the hotel where Arbuckle and Joe Stokes had put up on arrival.

An hour later, a grizzled, unkempt specimen of humanity visited the jail. Rip Van Winkle come to life could not have created more of a sensation in his native village than the emotions which the same aged scarecrow roused in the breast of Charlie Arbuckle.

"Didn't I see you talking with my friend just before we went back to the beach to haul in that sand?" he asked.

"You shore did."

"Are you a friend of his?"

"I knowed Joe about forty year."

"Then please rush a telegram to his wife in New York, telling her what's happened to him. Also tell her I was utterly unable to prevent what occurred. I promised his granddaughter to look out for Mr. Stokes when we left New York. But I never dreamed that such things could possibly occur. I thought this was a civilized country."

The grizzled one regarded him with twinkling eyes.

"You was aimin' to help Joe?" he tentatively queried.

"Why do you ask? Wouldn't anybody help him? Wasn't he on the level all the way? Didn't the sand I assayed down on that beach run just as high as the specimen I analyzed in New York? Wasn't Joe Stokes about to get a million dollars for that deposit of black sand? If you're a friend of his, it seems to me you wouldn't question his good faith. If you knew him forty years you ought to know he was honest. I hadn't known him for forty days —but I'd stake my life on him."

The grizzled one suddenly shot out a grimy paw and gripped Charlie Arbuckle's hand. The young chemist endeavored to withdraw it in vain. He might as well have struggled to escape from the embrace of a grizzly bear. For some moments the other pumped his hand up and down. Then, without a word, he rose, shook the door of the cell, and demanded to be set at liberty.

In half an hour Wilder appeared again and unlocked the prisoner.

"You're to go with me over to the jestice's office," he dourly observed, "and sign your bail bond."

Arbuckle followed in blank wonderment. He could not conjecture what would next occur in this bewildering drama. When he affixed his signature to the document, he noticed above the line on which he had written it, scrawled in a quaint, trembling chirography, the name "William Peel."

As he started over to the hotel to procure a change of clothes and a square meal, the grizzled one met him.

"I'll go up to your room with you, if you don't mind," said he. "Thar's a lot of fellers around here that hain't got nothin' to do but chaw terbaccer 'nd chaw the rag."

"I must look up Mr. William Peel, first, and thank him for his kindness to an utter stranger," protested Arbuckle.

"Don't look no farther, young feller," whispered the old man, as soon as they were out of earshot. "I'm Billy Peel. But if you try to thank me fer kindness to an utter stranger, you'll be wastin' time. When you said you'd bet your life on old Joe Stokes, I knowed you was white, clean through. Now, take a look out'n that winder, 'nd then listen to me."

The late prisoner looked long—and hard.

He was gazing directly down upon the railroad siding. A half dozen gondola-type cars stood on it, each one partially filled with the same mysterious

black sand which he now knew so well. As he gazed a wagon drew up by the side of one. The four horses which hauled it were streaming with sweat, and evidently at the point of exhaustion. The moment it was in position they were unhitched and led away. Another wagon followed, and then another. With each the operation was repeated.

As soon as the teams were detached, sturdy shovelers began filling the cars from each wagon. Arbuckle saw, with a sinking heart, that the precious black sand from this last load would quite fill each of the six cars. His temporary hope gave way to a renewed and more complete dejection than heretofore, as he watched the treasure-trove that should have enriched Joe Stokes passing into alien hands.

He turned to look at Billy Peel. That individual was grinning, but there was a peculiarly malevolent quality in the grimace that reminded Arbuckle of a cornered rat.

"Who is shipping the sand?" he asked.

"A party by name of Gundaker, who 'lows he owns the claim. Never mind, Mr. Arbuckle. You done all you could. I'm aimin' to take you out on my ranch fer a leetle rest afore you start back to New York."

"See here," burst out the late prisoner, "I don't need any rest. I want to go up the coast and find Uncle Joe's body, if I can. I promised his granddaughter to look out for him. That's little enough for me to do after the way I let him be murdered before my eyes."

Billy Peel slipped his arm through that of the younger man and led him from the room.

"You're too late, young feller," said he softly. "When you git back to New York, what's left of the old-timer'll be there, too. Now, don't you worry about nothin'. Joe done the best he knew how to do, 'nd so did you. Besides, Molly 'nd I figgered it all out yisterday. She said as how you ought to take a little rest, 'nd then come back to New York."

Arbuckle stared numbly for several seconds.

"Do you mean Mrs. Stokes has been here?" he demanded. "Who sent for her?"

"She had a dream about seein' Joe in the ocean, 'nd come herself. Of course, the way things has turned out, she was in a powerful hurry to git back to New York. You kin understand how she didn't have enough time to stop off to pay you a call—the way things has turned out, kain't ye?"

Arbuckle nodded. From Billy Peel's manner, the only inference possible was that Molly Stokes was too grief-stricken to endure the meeting. Of a sudden he felt weak and spiritless. Nothing was worth while, not even his profession. Of what avail was it that men should spend their lives in arduous toil, braving the utmost of privation year after year, as Joe Stokes had done, only to see the cup of fortune snatched away at last?

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DESPERATE MR. DESCHER.

When Charlie Arbuckle opened the door of his office and stepped inside, his furtive demeanor reflected the sense of guilt which had obsessed him from the very hour he had seen Joe Stokes swept out to sea.

Even the enforced rest which he had taken on Billy Peel's wonderful ranch had brought no surcease to his accusing conscience. He had remained there a week, partly out of a sense of courtesy to one who had risked five thousand dollars to insure his deliverance from jail and partly because he could not summon up sufficient courage to face

Molly Stokes and Mary on his return to New York.

To his unbounded satisfaction, Billy Peel had not offered the slightest objection to his return. The gratitude which he felt for this veteran of the great West, who had "known old Joe Stokes for forty year," partially assuaged the feeling of despondency the young chemist felt. Also, he must think of his business. By now the office would be half buried with ore specimens, and his desk would be piled high with mail from indignant clients, each of whom would be demanding to know why the unconscionable delay in transmitting to them reports on which hundreds of thousands of dollars of ore values depended.

As he glanced around the familiar room, in which his buoyant ambition had once glowed so brilliantly, Charlie Arbuckle grew sick at heart. It was such a different home-coming from what he had planned. He had pictured the triumphant return of Joe Stokes, the repayment of the I O U which the aged miner had given him; the sense of satisfaction which no money could buy as he again greeted the shy, sweet granddaughter, whose face now rose to confront him with an accusation which he could neither deny nor condone.

He had been a coward. Therein lay the terrible ignominy of it all. At the first sight of a pistol, he had thrown himself flat on the ground. Had he stood up and sought to placate the pock-marked Wilder—had he even thrown himself in sheer desperation against the muzzle of that murderous weapon which had menaced one of the most unique and admirable characters Arbuckle had ever met among mining men —how much better it might all have terminated.

Mechanically he crossed the room, removing the leaves from the daily calendar. It had been the nineteenth of August when he had left New York, it was the nineteenth day of September when he had returned.

Thirty days, as men compute time—an eternity to his remorseful soul. He threw the accumulated leaves into the wastebasket with a bitter smile; he scooped up the month's mail from the floor and arranged it in neat piles on his desk, after wiping off the dust.

Then he took off his coat, seated himself in a chair, and began thumbing over the postal cards from the express company, each telling of some package which had remained undelivered. Charlie Arbuckle knew that in the mail before him would be details of the specimens and queries as to when the reports might be expected.

He realized dully that no matter how great the grief one carries, life still has its inevitable round of duty; that to die is easy, it is the living on that is hard.

He reached for an envelope opener and began the task of sorting his mail; later in the day he would go out to call on Mrs. Stokes—and Mary. He had not yet the courage to face them.

Suddenly the door burst open and a man rushed in, unceremoniously neglecting to close it behind him. Arbuckle stared up into the livid features of Leo Descher.

Whatever of geniality or affability that gentleman had ever possessed seemed to have been entirely dissipated, to judge from the appearance of his face. It was a countenance from which all except the most demoniacal and revengeful of expressions had vanished. His heavy-lidded eyes were bloodshot, and they seemed to stab the space between them.

"Well?" said Arbuckle coolly. "To what am I indebted for the honor of this unexpected visit, Mr. Descher?"

Descher gave every symptom of a man speechless from the effects of some new and unclassified paroxysm. He rolled his eyes, waved his clenched fists,

in one of which he held a tightly wadded bit of paper, stammered, gulped, and glared.

"Something seems to have affected you unpleasantly," went on Arbuckle, with quiet scorn. "Before you proceed to purge your system of whatever poison it contains, may I ask why you failed to reply to my telegram from Cazadero, telling you I had been incarcerated in that city?"

Another man entered the room. It was Billy Nevins. His pudgy figure covered the space between the door and the desk in three leaps.

"Hello, old scout!" he cried, dodging nimbly past Descher and wringing Arbuckle's hand. "Why, you look as good as the secretary of the treasury visiting a sick bank." Nevins winked broadly and jerked a thumb at the still-speechless Descher. "What's the matter with your friend—brain storm?"

Before Arbuckle could frame a fitting reply, a new voice fell, in measured, deliberate accents, upon the ears of the three men:

"Good morning, gentlemen—and Mr. Descher!"

Joe Stokes, serene and unruffled as always, but clad in a natty suit of gray and a becoming hat of the same hue, walked quietly in. The effect of his peculiar greeting had not died away when he stepped over to the desk and clasped Arbuckle's hand.

At first, Arbuckle felt he must be the victim of hallucination, but there could be no mistaking his normality after that grip—it held too much of the quality of Billy Peel's in Cazadero jail for the chemist to fail to comprehend that Joe Stokes was not only not dead, but so very much alive that Arbuckle's fingers were dubious whether to tingle painfully or relapse into complete paralysis.

As nonchalantly as if his return had been accompanied by no unusual incident, Uncle Joe seated himself and turned his faded eyes complacently upon Mr. Leo Descher. That gentleman automatically sank into the chair which Billy Nevins pushed forward—with another broad wink in Arbuckle's direction.

"Well, to-day's the nineteenth of September, Mr. Descher," began the old miner. "I s'pose you're all ready to exercise your option on that black sand o' mine."

The quiet remark galvanized Descher into speech. He leaped from his chair, waving the paper which he had clutched from the moment of his first entrance.

"You're a fraud!" he howled. "Yes, you and this honest metallurgist with the international reputation. I'll show you up—I'll slam you both into jail for the balance of your lives. Why, of all the crooked deals that ever were put over in the history of American mining, this one is the limit!"

"What's that?" roared Arbuckle, lunging to his feet and projecting himself halfway across the desk at his accuser. "You say I'm——"

Billy Nevins thrust him back into his chair—and winked again. That wink was famous along the Street. This morning Billy seemed to have nothing else in his whole armory of repartee save that silent, but most significant, twitching eyelid.

Uncle Joe Stokes did not appear to notice the accusation. He was staring at the door leading into the laboratory, as he began to speak in the low, deliberate, irrelevant manner so characteristic of the man.

"Back in '72, me 'nd Lish MacCurdy was over near where Bullfrog, Nevada, is now, lookin' fer a ledge a feller named Mike McDonald had found 'nd sampled. Mike, he got shot through the head in a fight with Whisky Joe Wheeler. Nobody knowed where the ledge was, but it musta been a mighty rich one, jedgin' from th' samples. So Lish 'nd me started out to locate it.

One day, jest about noon, we come on a big rattler sunnin' hisself on a shelf o' rock. I says to Lish: 'Looky there at that fat, sassy feller. Let's have some fun with him.'

"So me 'nd Lish, we got a lot o' skunk cactus, the leetle, fine kind that don't grow no bigger'n a crab apple. We strung it all around the sleepy old rattler 'nd kept pushin' it closter 'nd closter, until we had him all ringed in with it. Then Lish throwed a stone over that bounced right agin' the sassy critter. He woke up, stuck his head in the air, seen us two fellers a-grinnin' at him, 'and then begin to rattle like all git out. We drawed off a leetle way 'nd watched him. Purty soon he started to crawl down the ledge toward his hole. Then he hit one of them there skunk cactuses 'nd squirmed around another way. He did this two or three times.

"Then he seen there warn't no way out—'nd he begin to rattle wuss than he had afore. I never, in all my born days, heerd no snake rattle the way that feller did. It was somethin' scand'lous—he made almost as much noise as a tenor drum. You could have heerd him poundin' away fer half a mile. Then, all of a sudden, when he realized he was ketched, he turned around 'nd bit hisself more'n fifty times. He kept on bitin' hisself 'nd thrashin' around on that ledge, every now 'nd ag'in rollin' into another o' them skunk cactuses.

"I never enjoyed anything half so much as I did the way that there snake kept on torturin' hisself. By 'nd by he died of his own p'ison 'nd the skunk cactuses, that kept workin' into his spotted hide.

"Well, when he was dead, me 'nd Lish MacCurdy, we went up on that ledge, 'nd, sure enough, it was the Mike MacDonald claim, all right. We opened her up, 'nd she panned out so big that Mike's fambly had enough to eddicate all of the kids—'nd there was nine on 'em. They'll tell you about the Rattlesnake Ledge to-day, if you go out into the Bullfrog district. Ever been out that way, Mister Descher?"

"No!" roared the infuriated man.

"Oh, I plumb forgot—your name warn't Descher when you plumped into that there double-compartment shaft on Mohawk ground, you 'nd Deppity Sheruff Jim Wilder, together. Your name was Gundaker, then, wasn't it? Leastwise, that's what they called you over in Bullfrog when a feller you tried to swindle shot you through the hand, warn't it?"

"I'll have the law on you for this! I'll——"

"You'll bust a blood vessel if you hain't carefuller," admonished the unmoved miner. "What are you yellin' about? Didn't them six cars o' black sand you shipped from Cazadero to Perth Amboy, in the name o' George Gundaker, pan out the way you expected when you wired Jim Wilder to jump what you thought was my property?"

"Who says I wired him in the name of George Gundaker?"

"Well, Billy Peel's youngest boy's the tellegraft operator that tuck the message when it got to Cazadero. Billy 'nd me's been pals fer more'n forty year. If it hadn't been fer Billy Peel, I'd 'a' been drownded by the Japanese current in the dark o' the moon when the *Brother Jonathan* went ashore on the Californy coast. You recollect, don't you, Mr. Nevins, about my tellin' you how Billy Peel drug me back into his saloon the night the *Brother Jonathan* sailed from the Market Street wharf in San Francisco?"

"Very well, indeed," replied the pudgy one. "It was almost as interesting as the specimen of black sand you left at our office and which Mr. Arbuckle analyzed for us. By the way, his report tallies with that the other chemists gave us—to a hair. Mr. Ar-

buckle is preëminent in his profession, despite Mr. Descher's opinion to the contrary."

The young chemist, who had been sitting open-mouthed, gave Nevins a grateful look as Descher sullenly replied:

"Well, what has that telegram of Gundaker's got to do with me? Any one else might have sent it."

"But it happens they didn't," placidly countered Joe Stokes. "The same operator that works the tellegraft key down in the basement of the Occidental Trust Company, where your office is, Mister Descher, that tuck the message to you from Mr. Arbuckle, who's the honestest young chemist I ever met up with, also tuck the message from you signed George Gundaker to Jim Wilder out in Cazadero. Tain't everybody wears a big diamond in their necktie or parts their hair in the middle like you do. You might, at least, have kept away from the skunk cactuses long enough to have used a messenger boy."

Descher leaped from the chair; but, as the movement brought no responsive alarm, he resumed it again.

"Oh, you'll squirm some more, afore I'm through with you," grimly rejoined the ancient one, facing him with a trace of the first anger he had exhibited.

"I don't keer how many ambuscades you plant—what gits my goat is that you should git the idea in your peaked head that you could ambush an old-timer that has gone agin' the best young bucks that ever jumped a reservation with Geronimo—years afore you was born. I don't mind bein' swindled—but I shore git riled up when any one takes me fer a plumb fool. But we'll let that pass 'nd git down to bizness. What I want to know is whether or not you want to exercise your option fer a million dollars on my black-sand claim. You've got your option, I presume?" continued Uncle Joe, with every appearance of real solicitude.

Descher writhed, and made no answer.

"It's now jest seven minits after ten o'clock on the mornin' of September 19th. Your safety-deposit box, down in the cellars o' the Occidental Trust Company, has a time lock that'll open any time now. If you want that black-sand claim fer a million dollars, jest say the word 'nd produce your copy of the option I signed."

Nevins leaned forward with a serio-comic expression.

"Yes, Descher, for Heaven's sake, give us an idea of your intentions, won't you? Al Devore is dancing like a rooster on a hot griddle down in our office. If you don't take that claim off Mr. Stokes' hands at a million, we'll buy it for two million the minute you decide you don't want it. We got hold of some real money since he left, and we've had his property experted by another firm."

Descher gave renewed symptoms of apoplexy.

"I don't think you'll buy it for two million," satirically interposed Joe Stokes, "because Mr. Descher sold a half interest in the claim Mr. Gundaker jumped to a German syndicate several days ago for five million. That's what's worryin' him—that 'nd the fact that six cars o' black sand that him 'nd his pardner, Jim Wilder, saw to it was shipped from Cazadero to Perth Amboy turned out yisterday to analyze so little that Mr. Descher's stuck fer the freight charges—'nd every one over to Perth Amboy refinery thinks he's gone nutty.

"Of course, Mr. Descher had a bug under his chip, all the way, but the bug won't crawl no more. Jim Wilder squshed the poor bug into the ground completely when Jim went down 'nd jumped a piece o' ground that Mr. Arbuckle was samplin' and which same was no good at all. The real samples Mr. Arbuckle had analyzed was from another place altogether—more'n fif-

teen mile north of where Jim Wilder got a wild idee it was. Nacherally, Mr. Descher's goin' to bite hisself presently, because he's all ringed in with skunk cactuses. All I'm aimin' to do is to invite Mr. Arbuckle to go over to the safe-deposit vaults 'nd wait till noon, when Mr. Descher's time to produce his option 'nd exercise it will expire."

## CHAPTER X.

### AT THE TRAIL'S END.

Charlie Arbuckle, to whom the still-unexplained reappearance of the old miner had lifted from the depths to the heights, was only restrained from hurling himself at the perfidious Descher's throat by another of the cryptic agitations of Billy Nevins' eyelid, when the tortured swindler played his last card.

"You seem to have forgotten one condition, Mr. Stokes," Descher politely replied.

"Name it," answered his vis-à-vis imperturbably.

The crafty swindler paused. Over his saturnine face passed a flicker of his coming triumph. He repressed it, however, and his suave, affable manner was as self-contained as if he had not been subjected to more insults in the past half hour than most men would allow to go unchallenged in a lifetime.

"The option does not necessarily run out at noon to-day. Also, it provided, did it not, that in event of the car of black sand that *you* were to ship, not *I*, Mr. Stokes, not arriving within thirty days, in that event the option was to be automatically extended for thirty additional days? That is my recollection of the provisions, although I may be at fault," he unctuously concluded. "Also, as the Cazadero claim had been abandoned, I don't see why I should be criticized for speculating in any property that looks promising."

"The option will show whether or not you're right," enigmatically replied Stokes. "Let's go over and have a look at it. The Cazadero claim shore belongs to George Gundaker—that is, to you."

"Have you the copy of the option I gave you?" persisted Descher craftily.

"I know where it is. If you want to exercise your option, why not produce your own copy to save time?"

Descher's confident demeanor suffered a sudden reaction. He darted a swift, incredulous look at the older man. Then, by a prodigious effort, he struggled to regain his poise.

"If you have your copy with you, I would suggest that it will save still more time for us to examine it here. Also, as the 'location-and-extent-unknown' clause was in it, I may conclude to either close to-day or call for my extension."

"That suits me to a T," replied the old miner. "If you can find any such provision as you have mentioned in my copy, Mr. Descher, you're sure welcome to the extension of time you mention—as I ask these two gentlemen to bear witness to what I say. Joe Stokes never went back on his word yit—and never will. Here's my option, Mr. Descher. I alluz carry it in the right-hand breast pocket of my coat, the same place I did when I left New York."

The speaker withdrew his hand from his inner pocket. He brought out a bulky envelope. Descher's mottled face grew more livid than ever; his bulging eyes protruded so far they threatened to pop from their sockets, and his breath became merely a succession of labored gasps.

With trembling hands, he pulled back the flap of the envelope the other man gave him and pawed futilely at the contents of the package. Then, more desperately, he emptied it upon the top of Arbuckle's desk.

A few blackened fragments wavered in the air, then floated down to the flat surface.

Joe Stokes rose from his chair. He towered over the well-groomed figure of the man who had tried to rob him of his granddaughter's legacy. For this supreme moment he had waited.

All that had gone before, as both Nevins and Arbuckle immediately saw, had been merely preparatory to the climax of the drama—a succession of swift scenes in which the hero, contrary to popular conception, was in the sere and yellow leaf—and the villain of the piece a robust man in the very prime of life.

Descher essayed a sarcastic smile.

"Of course, Mr. Stokes, I cannot point out to you the provision of the option when you have burned the document."

"Of course you kain't," returned the prospector. "But, Mr. Descher, from now on you will please keep a civil tongue in your head—or you'll wish you had. And, to prove to you that I'm not triflin' with you, slick, dirty, lazy, low, swindlin' rattlesnake though you be, I'll give you every grain o' my black-sand claim—right here 'nd now—on one condition."

None of the three men who heard the statement could believe their ears. But, had they thought themselves in error, the expression in the blue orbs of Joe Stokes would have undeceived them. They were faded no longer. Cold, brilliant as the blue-white blade of a rapier, those menacing eyes bored into the shrinking figure of the pseudo-genial Descher—bored with a resistless, unwavering, all-penetrating gaze.

"Mr. Descher, if you will go with Mr. Arbuckle, Mr. Nevins, 'nd me over to the Occidental Trust Company's safe-deposit vaults, right now, 'nd open that there box you put that time lock on thirty days ago to-day, if you can find that provision in your copy of the option—I'll give you my black-sand claim; otherwise, Nevins & Devore gits it fer two million dollars, one minit after twelve o'clock."

He waited patiently for the other man to reply.

"What's the matter, Mr. Descher? All you gotta do is to walk over to that buildin', open your box, take out a piece o' paper, 'nd make a million dollars. It won't take you ten minits—all told. Hain't a hundred thousand dollars a minit enough pay fer the humiliation you've gone through this mornin'? Remember what the chief chemist over at Perth Amboy called you yisterday? He said you was a lunatic fer shippin' six cars of such stuff down there from Californy, didn't he?

"Come on, Mister Descher! You're one of these take-a-chance fellers, hain't you? Didn't you flip off twenty-five one-hundred dollar bills to me down in that same cellar, thirty days ago this mornin'? And on a piece o' sand 'location 'nd extent unknown?' Well, you don't know the location 'nd extent, yit, do you? Then ask Billy Nevins fer the figgers 'nd values. He'll tell you she runs more'n forty thousand ton at an average of two hundred dollars a ton. Why not take a chance, produce the option you got over in the safe-deposit box with my name on it, exercise it, 'nd go back to Perth Amboy, wavin' a shawl strap full o' thousand-dollar bills at that there chief chemist in the reduction works? Hain't you game to make *him* look like a monkey—no matter what the rest o' the world thinks about *you?*"

Mr. Leo Descher's cup of wormwood and gall was not only full—it now overflowed. He had fallen into the pit he had digged for another. He bolted wildly from the room.

It was Billy Nevins who broke the silence.

"What ails that guy, anyway?"

"Mr. Descher hain't feelin' as well's usual this forenoon," solemnly explained Uncle Joe Stokes. "When a

fathead like him lays an ambuscade, calcerlatin' to make a clean git-away with five million or so, 'nd finds hisself stuck fer a big freight bill—well, the only way to hurt anybody like Descher's to hit 'em plumb in the heart. Their heart's their pocketbook. You kin insult 'em, 'nd they won't fight. You kin bawl hell out'n 'em, 'nd they love you fer it—so long's they think you got a penny left they're goin' to git. But when you rip 'em up the back 'nd leave 'em hopeless—then's when they hustle out to shuffle off. I'll bet you my black-sand claim agin' a green doughnut, Descher's borryin' somebody's carbolic acid right now."

"But why," chimed in Arbuckle, "didn't he go over and produce his option? Surely he has tried hard enough to defraud you out of your property to see the thing through—no matter how flagrant his conduct might appear. What more could he lose? Why did he pass up a chance to grab a million—cold?"

"Shucks, sonny, I knowed 'nd he knowed he hadn't a chanst. Why, Descher hain't even the *ghost* of a chanst—not from the minit I recognized him in this here office as the same George Gundaker that went in pardners with Jim Wilder, 'nd tried to jump a double-compartment shaft in a rich piece o' Mohawk ground out in Goldfield. He tried to bully a feller over in Bullfrog—'nd got shot through the hand. I seen the scar—I was onto his curves from the start. He was layin' fer to ambush me—me!—Joe Stokes—after Geronimo's smartest young bucks tried to ambuscade me 'nd couldn't, afore this same baby Descher was born. That's what got me het up, this mornin'—not the way he'd acted exactly, but the danged conceit of the Dutch lunkhead."

"It's ten minutes to twelve," announced Billy Nevins. "You may lose out yet, Uncle Joe."

"Where's he goin' to git another option?" demanded the prospector, with a trace of asperity.

"He has one over in the safe-deposit vaults, hasn't he? No matter how rotten his record is, that option is a contract. He can hold you to it."

"Well, why didn't he take me up, then, Billy? Ain't you wise *yit?* Why, this Gundaker or Descher or whatever his name is hain't got nothin' but black ashes in his safe-deposit box. He fixed both copies o' that fake option th' same way. He soaked th' paper it was writ on in phosphorus solution. All his stallin' around about puttin' on that time lock for thirty days so's he couldn't git at the copy *he* kept was part o' his ambuscade. Descher warn't goin' to *buy* my claim—he was goin' to *jump* it. He knowed my copy'd burn up—ask Charlie here—he seen it set both our coats afire the same day, long afore our train got to Albany.

"I had my option in my inside coat pocket, where I alluz keep my papers. My money I keep in my inside vest pocket. After we got on the train, we both tuck off our coats. We had a couple of lemonades it was so hot. Then, without ary one so much as techin' the coats, they both blazed up in the rack overhead. I was jest sayin' to Charlie what I'd been thinkin' to myself. I says: 'Joe, you're more'n seventy year old. If you're ever goin' to git a grain o' sense, it's about time. What's the bug under Mr. Descher's chip? He hain't never goin' to die with enlargement o' the heart—he hain't that kind.' Then the porter come runnin' over 'nd grabbed the coats out'n the rack and accused us of settin' the train on fire—or suthin' like that.

"What more did I want? It was *my* coat that ketched fire fust—not Charlie's. And it ketched from the pocket that held nothin', 'ceptin' that option. Why, any fathead ought to know that phosphorus is the only thing

in the world that'll act that way. I knowed it in a minit. That was the fust bug I seen under Mr. Descher's twenty-five-hundred-dollar chip. I seen another when Jim Wilder gits on our Pullman car, out in Californy. 'Aha! Joe,' says I, 'here's more of Descher's ambuscade.' So I let Mr. Wilder 'nd Mr. Descher walk right into their own trap."

He paused, regarding the two with a gleam of merriment in his kindly eyes, the corners of his grim mouth twitching at the memory.

"I just went up to Cazadero, knowin' there was a lot o' black sand back o' there that every sucker that ever hit the West had panned for gold. It don't carry any tungsten, but has a leetle gold —but it's greasy stuff—can't git enough to pay for runnin' it through a riffle, to say nothin' of payin' freight on it acrost the country. Now, when I first smelt this ambuscade, I didn't know how many was in it. So I tried out Charlie, here. I had to play him a sort o' low-down trick, to be sure—but I *had* to be sure, because this sand's my granddaughter's legacy.

"If them fellers aimed to ambush me, I knowed they'd do it right, if they could. Charlie Arbuckle had introduced me to Descher. Nacherally, I figgered Charlie was in on the ambuscade. That's where I figgered wrong, 'nd I'm goin' to square it. I will say for Charlie that he's the honestest young feller I ever seen."

"Don't, Uncle Joe!" pleaded the chemist. "I've been very weak and foolish—or you wouldn't have been put to so much trouble."

"Now, sonny, you let your Uncle Joe talk a leetle more. I know how you feel, but you hain't seen the last bug under the chip yit—which is my own bug.

"I tested Charlie out in my own way," continued Joe Stokes, speaking to Nevins. "It was a shame the way I made that poor boy believe the sand down back o' Cazadero was the *real* sand I had hid out on the coast. All I had to do was to grab a handful out'n the sack I had in my kit—'nd give it to him, 'nd he'd analyze it, 'nd go up ten thousand feet in the air on his own power. I says to myself: 'Joe, this here clever chemist may be honest, but that ain't sayin' he ain't in the same ambuscade with Gundaker 'nd Wilder. Keep yer eye peeled.' So I did. I let him send his wire to Descher. Then I let Descher send Jim Wilder down to arrest us fer shippin' Gundaker's sand."

"Do you mean you knew Wilder was coming?" exclaimed Arbuckle.

"How could I help knowin' it when Billy Peel's oldest girl is chief clerk to the county recorder in Cazadero, 'nd his son's a tellegraft operator in the same town? Wilder filed in Gundaker's name the minit Descher got your telegram, Charlie. Hain't Billy Peel 'nd me been pals for more'n forty year? His girl tipped me off when the Gundaker papers was filed. Well, I knowed then that the show-down was sure to come. So I shipped eight big wagon-loads of good-fer-nothin', greasy sand down to Cazadero. Then I fit Jim Wilder all over the beach. Jim won't never draw on another old-timer—he's shakin' yit, 'nd he's shook up quite a lot sence Billy Peel's told him how Billy hisself pulled all the good ca'tridges out'n Jim's gun 'nd stuffed it full o' ca'tridges with putty bullets dipped in blue chalk.

"Every time Jim Wilder took a shot at me, I laffed till I like to busted. Then I run down the beach, jumped in, 'nd the Japanese current, which was runnin' out, ketched me 'nd whirled me round the p'int, where Billy Peel was waitin' fer me, same's I'd waited fer him thirty year before, with a boat. Only Billy's was one of these new doodads, a motor boat—runs like all git out. Well, I clumb in, 'nd Billy give

me a flask o' whisky, 'nd we hit it up the coast. I landed on the real black sand inside of an hour. Then Wilder 'nd Descher went on to ship the other stuff, six full carloads of it. I didn't know then that Charlie had been in jail fer a week, till Molly told me, when she met me in Cazadero, one night, on my way back to New York to meet Nevins and Devore."

It was all plain to the young chemist except how Nevins and his partner came to have another car of the genuine ore. In reply to his query, Nevins explained that a car of the genuine sand had been shipped to Perth Amboy in the name of Mary Stokes, as the old miner's granddaughter was to inherit the entire fortune. Also, with some gusto, the pudgy broker dilated on the merriment of the chief chemist at the Perth Amboy refinery, who, after informing Descher that he was crazy, had been told the true inwardness of the affair.

"Run along, sonny," adjured Joe Stokes, as the broker concluded. "Charlie 'nd me'll drop in on you after we've had somethin' to eat."

"Oh, king, live forever!" bowed the pudgy one. "But grant to thy faithful subjects that same sand for two million bucks, and it please your majesty."

"It's goin' to break Mr. Descher's heart, after all this ambuscadin'—but I kain't help it. Git out, will ye? I got some private business with this here chemist."

"Your majesty will not fail to affix your royal signature to certain papers of state this hallowed day?" persisted Nevins.

"Just as soon's we've got done eatin'."

Nevins vanished. In the cozy restaurant, Uncle Joe beamed upon the man who had befriended him.

"Your cut is twenty-five per cent, Charlie." He stifled the other's protest by continuing: "It was your loan of a thousand that let me put it over on that rattlesnake, Descher. I used that money to git out the real sand. That's the only kind you ever assayed, sonny. I alluz tuck a handful out'n my bag when you warn't lookin'."

The waiter took their order, and the septuagenarian continued:

"The folks made me promise to bring you out to dinner to-night. But you're taking turrible chances. After Molly heard Billy Peel tell how you swore by me, after they'd had you in that pesky Cazadero lockup fer a week, her 'nd Babe took a solemn oath to kiss you the minit you stuck foot inside the door."

For one who had endured so much, Charlie Arbuckle received the ominous news with a smile of heroic fortitude.

"Did—did Mary say it?" he asked, looking like a shy schoolboy.

"Sure, she did," reiterated the old man, with a quizzical smile, "and she insisted she'd do it fust!"

Charlie Arbuckle was happy.

THE END.

## GETTING AN EDUCATION

WHEN Newton D. Baker succeeded Lindley M. Garrison as secretary of war, the Washington gossips began to dig up the interesting things about him.

"I see," said Colonel Franklin P. Morgan, "that Baker once went to school to Woodrow Wilson."

"Yes," somebody commented, having in mind how firmly the president dominates his cabinet, "and he's doing it now."

# Snowed Up at Enchanted

By Hugh Pendexter

*Author of "The Ribbon of Death," "In the Orbit of the Beetle," Etc.*

**A snowstorm that helped in the solution of the one murder mystery that seemed unfathomable in a north-country settlement where other killings had occurred but without any attendant mystery**

THE killing of Jasper Martin, cashier of the Umnagog Company, threw a black shadow over the settlement. While life at the Forks was primitive, and death by violence not unknown, this was the first cold-blooded murder. Revenge, jealousy, drunken rage, each respectively had furnished its victims; but never before in the annals of the community had an assassin ruthlessly blotted out life for the sake of loot.

The murderer left no clew. Martin had been struck down while at his desk, presumably close to midnight. The office safe was found opened, but it had not been forced. It was Martin's habit to work late on the night preceding pay day, and the thief either knew this, or else happened in before the cashier closed the safe. The pay roll, some six thousand dollars, was missing.

Heretofore, crimes resulting from passion had been quickly proven by eye-witnesses, or by the settlement's knowledge of feud blood between the victim and a suspect. In the Martin case the mortal blow had been delivered by some one slaying for gain. This fact removed it from the ordinary category and enshrouded it with sinister mystery. A man's loves and hates were obvious and could be easily reckoned up, but the hidden willingness to kill for the sake of a few bundles of paper money made a potential murderer of every male in the Forks.

The Umnagog Company posted a generous reward, and the county officials worked overtime on the case. The sheriff, by a process of elimination, dropped man after man from his black list until Ben Slacker, a giant woodsman, alone was left. Nor was there any tangible evidence against him. He was known to be a morose sort of a fellow, sometimes given to lamenting his fate of being "shut up" in the woods, to resenting that his life should be cast in the lonely rôle of timber cruiser, when, by temperament, he should be carousing in town. With this meager basis for his suspicion, the sheriff made every effort to connect Slacker with the crime. But there was no evidence: simply a dead man sprawling across a desk before an empty safe. The lateness of the hour did away with the necessity of any suspect establishing an alibi, for, at the moment of the killing, the settlement was abed and asleep.

The authorities' one hope was to locate their man through the money. Consequently close tabs were kept on Slacker. He was watched day and night. He was followed and observed when he visited a neighboring town, where he loafed about a "speak-easy" and managed to have himself invited several times to the bar. He returned to the Forks without having spent any money. In short, his whole bearing was that of a man pinched in pocket. The sheriff learned his board bill was over-

due and that he was compelled to borrow small sums from various acquaintances to meet it. He even obtained an advance in wages from the company. The murder was committed in the spring, and Slacker was kept under espionage till late fall without betraying any signs of guilt. Then the officials gave it up, and conceded the murder was a closed incident.

After the frost had shaken the leaves from the hardwood growth, the company hired Bud Daniels, fresh from the woods of Wisconsin, and detailed him to accompany Slacker on a cruise of the north shores of Tom-Joe Lake, in Enchanted Plantation.

The snow spat down the low chimney and hissed at the roaring pine knots. Outside the world was lined with fleecy white. It was the beginning of the blizzard, and Slacker and Daniels, their work finished, had sought refuge in the deserted log cabin. Already the snow was piled to the small window, set high under the eaves. By morning it would be necessary to shovel it clear before the gray dawn could filter in.

"A whale of a blow," growled Slacker, who was lying on his blankets before the fire and sucking his empty pipe.

"Wish we had some terbaccer," lamented Daniels, scowling up at the snow-blurred window. "If we'd only been two days quicker, we'd be at Jackman's now."

"Got to have terbaccer," grunted Slacker, nodding his huge head. "Can't sleep if I don't smoke."

Daniels yawned and carefully scraped some dust from his Mackinaw pocket and remarked: "Speakin' of sleepin' makes me think of the time I was in Milwaukee and a feller was arrested for stealing some silk from a freight car. They knew he done the job, all right, but couldn't prove nothing. Guess how they nailed it onto him."

Slacker twiddled his pipe thoughtfully, and ventured: "Caught him with the stuff?"

"No, siree!" chuckled Daniels. "They listened to him while he talked in his sleep. You see, they'd bullied him day after day without gittin' a yip out of him. But their bullyin' put the idea into his mind he must always be on his guard, and, when he turned in at night, he took that idea to bed with him. The thought kept running through his mind and made him dream of the burglary. And derned if he didn't git to talkin' about it! He didn't only let on that he done the job, but he dropped enough to tell where the stuff was hid. What do you know about that? He had it all over 'em, but he couldn't keep his trap shet when he was asleep."

"Prob'ly he had the habit of talkin' in his sleep," slowly suggested Slacker.

"As for that, no man knows whether he talks in his sleep or not till some one puts him wise," said Daniels. "A man might tell me I talked in my sleep and I'd call him a liar; but, for all I know, I may be jabberin' away like a monkey every night."

"I never heard ye talk any," shortly said Slacker. "Guess ye never heard me, neither."

"Never noticed you to," admitted Daniels. "But the queer part of it is, so these scientific sharps say, a man may never talk in his sleep till he gits something on his mind. Then the first thing he knows he spits it out. Gits to dreamin', you know, then talkin'——"

"Never dreamed in my life," mumbled Slacker.

"Lawd! I do; every night. But what makes me sore is to think there's something inside of a man's nut that's willin' to give him the double cross the minute he's off his guard. Say I want to keep something under my hat: I watch my corners while awake, and never give a

sign; but the minute I go to sleep, that something inside, not givin' a cuss what happens to me, may tell everything I've kept covered up. Now that car burglar was betrayed——"

"Wish I had some terbaccer," broke in Slacker, moving restlessly and vainly searching his pockets for a few crumbs.

The snow had now crawled halfway up the window, and Daniels picked up a snowshoe, purposing to shovel it away.

But Slacker discouraged: "It's gittin' dark outside, and there won't no more light come in. Gee, but I wish I was down to Jackman's!"

"Why don't you be generous, and wish us both there?" bantered Daniels.

But Slacker was in no mood for persiflage, and he grumbled: "Yer fault we're out of terbaccer. It goes agin' the grain to wish ye in any comfortable place."

"I'd give a week's pay if I hadn't lost it," humbly assured Daniels. Then, after a few minutes of silence, he fished a soiled deck of cards from his pack and asked: "What say to a game?"

Slacker deigned no reply beyond a sharp shake of the head. Daniels sighed and replaced the cards and began ransacking the cabin. With a little squeal of delight he discovered an ancient patent-medicine almanac, and, seating himself within the firelight, he slowly spelled out advertisements, testimonials, jokes, and weather forecasts, mumbling much of it aloud.

Suddenly he exclaimed: "Talkin' about blabbin' in your sleep, here's a woman that couldn't sleep till she took six bottles of this here medicine, dollar a throw. Wish we had a box; bet it's loaded with rum. Listen: it says folks troubled with i-n-s-o-m—to the devil with such a word!"

"Says what?" snapped Slacker, leaning forward and pushing the blazing brands against the backlog.

"Insomny. Means keepin' awake nights, I take it. Says folks troubled that way always talk in their sleep."

"How can they talk in their sleep if they keep awake nights?" growled Slacker.

"Oh, of course they don't keep awake every night. Feel sort of restless, nerves on the ragged edge; then, when they drop off, they begin sayin' things."

With an oath, Slacker snatched the almanac from his companion's hand and hurled it into the fire. Daniels half rose, his eyes glittering. Slacker surlily apologized: "Did it afore I thought. All that stuff you read is lies, printed jest to sell the medicine."

"That's no reason why you should burn my readin'," wrathfully protested Daniels.

"Drop it!" grunted Slacker, raising one huge hand. "It got on my nerves. I said I didn't go for to do it."

"And they had the woman's picter," sighed Daniels, relaxing and ruefully watching the almanac crinkle and vanish up the chimney. "A man might lie, but a woman would prob'ly tell the truth. Why call it a lie? Ain't it natural? Say I can't sleep, perhaps from drinkin' too much. If I go without sleep long enough I git crazy in the head. Say I keep awake till I'm all in and then drop off for a few winks. Ain't my brain all excited and livin' things over and over? In that case wouldn't it be natural for me to babble?"

"Shet up! Blast this storm! Wonder if a man could make Jackman's goin' by compass alone."

"Don't believe he could read his compass, let alone fetching up at Jackman's," sullenly replied Daniels.

Slacker jumped to his feet and went to the door. The snow was drifted high against it, but had not packed, and his mighty shoulder forced it open. The moment he stepped out he was en-

veloped in a swirling mist. He could not breathe without inhaling the icy particles, nor could he see a dozen feet. In another hour of the failing light it would be impossible to read a compass, nor could one strike a light in such a chaos. He glared hungrily toward the south and visualized the cheery warmth of Jackman's halfway house. He could see the shelf of tobacco, the big stove roaring in the middle of the room. And he knew there would be something hot to drink which never paid a Federal tax, and that a man could have good company throughout the night, should he fancy to forego his bunk. But the venture now across Tom-Joe Lake was death; and, with a low imprecation, he returned to the fire and resumed his old position on the floor.

"Couldn't make it, could we?" asked Daniels.

"A lynx couldn't make it," snarled Slacker. Then, with a burst of passion: "Why did we come to this hell hole? Why should we spend our lives half froze, where we can't git nothing to drink or smoke? 'Cause folks in the city hanker for pine and spruce. See any city folks breakin' their necks for us? I'm through timber cruisin'."

"I ain't stuck on it any more'n you be," assured Daniels. "I'm goin' to town and git a job runnin' a planer or a gang saw."

Slacker returned to his study of the red coals. The hours wore themselves away. The wind howled through the forest, bent on sifting down enough snow to bury Enchanted as it hadn't been smothered in years. Neither of the men attempted conversation, till Daniels stretched his arms, yawned, and remarked:

"I'm goin' to make some tea, take a bite, and turn in. My eyes are glued tight." Slacker did not appear to have heard him; nor did he move or speak while his partner prepared the tea and fried some bacon. Offered his share, he bolted the bacon with vicious bites and gulped down the scalding tea as though performing a disagreeable duty.

"Goin' to stay up a while and listen to what the wind's tryin' to tell the pines?" rallied Daniels.

"'What the wind's tryin' to tell——' What the devil d'ye mean by such rot?" fiercely demanded Slacker, jerking his head about.

"I read in a storybook once where a feller said the wind was always tryin' to tell secrets to the pines, and that's why you can always hear 'em murmurin' when the other trees are mum," sheepishly explained Daniels.

"Huh!" grunted Slacker, his brows remaining bunched in a frown.

"Guess it's lucky no one understands what the wind's tryin' to say if it ever talks over men's secrets," sleepily continued Daniels, shaking out his blankets. "I know I'd be uneasy if it tried to tell on me. The feller wrote it for fun, of course. Tryin' to be a poet, mebbe. If there was anything in it, there'd be some bloody old secrets let loose on a night like this. Hark!"

With an eldritch scream, a blast came down the chimney and sent the sparks and smoke out into the room, causing Slacker to spring back frantically.

"Damnation!" he panted. "Go to sleep and keep yer trap shet. I mean it!"

"Needn't be so peevish," muttered Daniels. "Shall we toss for the bunk?"

"Take it! I'll stay here!" barked Slacker.

Gray dawn succeeded black night, with the elements still intent on blotting Enchanted from the face of the earth. The cabin was snowed under except for the top of the chimney. Slacker crouched before the fire, his eyes heavy, his big head nodding. Daniels, in the bunk, stretched and yawned and came to life. Fighting

back the mist in his sluggish brain, Slacker staggered to his feet, and, without a word, set water to boil and then struggled with the door till he had worked his way out. He stepped into an unreal world. The snow was above his waist, and very light. Even his mighty frame and iron muscles could not take him to Jackman's till the footing packed and hardened.

For two days Slacker slept none, except as he dozed off for a few minutes when seated before the fire. He insisted he could not sleep until he procured tobacco, but his eyes would close even while he was speaking. Daniels watched him sharply, reading madness in the deep-set eyes.

On the night of the second day he paced the small room back and forth, his tall figure swaying; and Daniels pleaded: "Crawl into the bunk and try it. You'll go batty if you don't sleep. I'll look after the fire."

"I don't feel sleepy," drowsily insisted Slacker. "If I do, I can sleep on the floor. To-morrer we must make a break for Jackman's."

Daniels turned in and soon was snoring lustily. Slacker rose on his knees and peered at him cunningly, rubbing his eyes to clear his vision of the motes and specks ever dancing before him. Then he sank into his blankets and relaxed beneath the genial warmth of the fire. His head sank to his arm. He lifted it with a jerk and stared at the sleeper in the bunk. Then it fell with a thud, and his eyes closed and he was asleep. It seemed to him as though he had lost himself for only a second, before he was erect in the middle of the room, glaring wildly about. The light from the fire revealed Daniels sitting on the edge of the bunk, watching him with an odd, startled manner.

"What is it? What's the matter?" choked Slacker, pawing the nervous sweat from his forehead.

"Search me and ask yourself!" cried Daniels. "What'n sin's the matter with *you?* What do you mean by howlin' like a loon and scarin' me 'most to death?"

"Me holler? I didn't!" hoarsely denied Slacker.

"All right. Have it your own way," muttered Daniels, leaning back. "Mebbe I dreamed it. Mebbe I didn't. Mebbe I'm bughouse and don't know when a man wakes me out of a sound snooze by yellin' something about 'blood.'"

"'Blood?'" whispered Slacker, wheeling and darting his insane gaze about the room. The next second he was seized by madness and was screaming: "Ye lie! I never said it!" And he sprang toward the bunk, his powerful hands half closed like claws.

The muzzle of a forty-four brought him to a sharp halt, while Daniels warned: "Come out of it, Slacker. I don't figger on bein' killed by any crazy man. You're my pal, and I like you. But if you try any crazy stunts, I'm goin' to pot you. What's got into you, anyway? Anything on your chest to keep you from sleepin'? If so, spit it out, and git rid of it and take a snooze."

"There ain't nothing on my mind!" groaned Slacker, walking unsteadily across the room and slumping down on the end of a log which did service for a stool. "If I bleated anything in my sleep it was along of bein' shet off from my terbaccer. It don't mean nothing."

"If it did mean something it wouldn't cut any ice with me," soothed Daniels. "I may take a turn at talkin' in my sleep, and what of it? We're pals, ain't we? Most of us could tell things what would land us in a smaller room than this. But there ain't no danger so long as we pal with them we trust. Mebbe I'd be out in Milwaukee now if not for certain reasons. Mebbe I

know more about that car burglar then I've let on. Perhaps that feller made a git-away afore servin' his sentence. Perhaps he took to this neck of the woods——"

"Gawd! Ye're that feller?" gasped Slacker, his eyes glowing.

"Well, what if I be?" curtly demanded Daniels. "If I be that feller, you can count on one thing: I've got it off my chest, and don't do any more talkin' in my sleep. What if I be?"

"Why, in that case I'd take a real sleep," sighed Slacker. "Lawd, ye needn't finger the gun! No call to be 'fraid of *me*."

"I don't know about that. Some of you fellers up here strike me as bein' cussed high and mighty," grumbled Daniels.

Slacker threw back his head and laughed raucously, his weakened nerves collapsing, his self-control crumbling. He shouted and roared and beat his knee, filling the room with a clamor that drowned out the noise of the storm. In a climax of ferocious pride he thrust his red visage forward and yelled: "Car robbery, ye runt! What'd ye say if I told ye I croaked a man?" Instantly the confession was out, his jaw dropped and he rubbed his chin stupidly and became silent. He seemed to shrink within himself, only his eyes remaining wolfishly alert as he studied Daniels.

"I've had more'n one chum that's done the same," quietly informed Daniels. "But I never had one who was fool enough to lose sleep over it." And he tossed the gun into the head of the bunk.

"Ye don't ask no questions?" jerkily observed Slacker, his hands dropping between my knees.

"My ways of livin' never took me among angels," replied Daniels. "The only thing that fusses me is to have you bleatin' out and spoilin' my sleep."

"The man I croaked was in a fair fight," explained Slacker, very quiet now.

"I had a chum in Minnesota who croaked three, *not* in fights, and he was the best pal I ever had. He never busted up my sleep."

"And they got him?"

"Got nothing. Drownded river drivin'."

"And he slept without yappin'?"

"Not at first. But once I'd drilled the idea into his head he must sleep or go crazy, that he must let himself go and git all the talk out of his system, he turned in for a real sleep. After that he never yipped, and we was together two years. You see, the minute he made up his mind he didn't care, that he might as well blab as go crazy, the hankerin' to talk in his sleep quit him. That's the only way—sleep and let everything go hang."

Slacker rose to his feet and rocked back and forth on his heels, weighing something. He abruptly announced: "I'm goin' to take a snooze." With that he fell to the floor and immediately became unconscious.

Once more the sun reigned over Enchanted, but the north wind refused to abandon its task, and the light snow, blown in bewildering clouds, might as well have been squalls of fire so far as snowshoeing to Jackman's was concerned. The two castaways waited with furious impatience for the drifts to settle and permit travel. Slacker had slept the clock nearly round, and rose normal in poise. He was brief of speech and took to studying Daniels furtively. The latter boasted of various offenses against the law. Slacker refused to repeat his confession.

As the wind showed no signs of ceasing its demoniac onslaught, Slacker emerged from his brooding abstraction and began railing against his lot and cursing the chance that led him into becoming a timber cruiser. He con-

cluded his outburst by vehemently declaring: "I don't have to earn my livin' this way. I can smoke my pipe and take it easy."

"Erhuh?" lazily prompted Daniels. "You don't have to do this kind of work?"

"Meanin' I can git a different kind of a job," slowly appended Slacker, averting his gaze. "By to-morrer I start for Jackman's, and all the snow 'tween here'n Hades can't stop me. And the first thing I'll git is a long, hot drink."

"Me, too," heartily indorsed Daniels.

The wind began to drop as the afternoon drew toward night, and the men sat up late, fighting the hours, their thoughts on Jackman's hospitality. As they were rolling up in their blankets for a brief nap, Slacker suddenly said: "All this talk I've made is to be left up here in this room."

"Sure," assented Daniels. "Think we're phonygraphs or parrots to go round repeating it?"

"And when I say I croaked a man, I mean the feller had as good a show as I did." A pause; then: "He had a better show. Come at me with a pick pole. It was on the Allegash, years ago, in the spring drive." Daniels remained mute, and, after a bit of silence, Slacker laboriously completed: "I hit him—with a stake. Knocked him into the river—and he was drownded."

"Bah, that ain't croakin' a man! That's self-defense," said Daniels scornfully.

"Course it was self-defense," eagerly agreed Slacker. "Didn't think I'd croak a man any other way, did ye? Knocked him in the river, and he was drownded. But it don't do no good to chew it over."

"Not a bit. Jest kindly keep shet about what I've let drop," cautioned Daniels.

They overslept, and the sun was high, much to their disgust, when they were ready to leave the cabin. The snow was beaten firm by the pounding of the wind, and in the openings and on the lake revealed rare modelings. But neither had an eye for beauty this morning. Daniels was grave and preoccupied. Slacker was morose, lines of worry creasing his broad, red face. He watched his companion thoughtfully, as though striving to arrive at some momentous decision. He knew men were inclined to be garrulous when marooned by a storm in the big woods, for then one must talk or grow heartsick because of inaction. Under such conditions, however, it is well to keep the conversation impersonal. He realized he had talked too freely. He wondered if Daniels was regretting his own burst of confidence.

It required no effort to arraign the storm for delaying their departure from the woods. And he felt a great rage against the bowed form breaking the trail ahead. If Daniels hadn't lost the tobacco, what had been said would now be unvoiced. All of Daniels' disquieting conversation, the remarks which had made him afraid to sleep, pivoted on the tobacco. Also, that bosh about the wind whispering things to the pines. He glanced malevolently up at the gently swaying tops on his right and pricked his ears to catch their mysterious murmuring.

"Swing out into the lake," he brusquely called.

"Thought you wanted to keep inshore and git the shelter——"

"I want to see where I'm goin'," rumbled Slacker, changing his course without waiting for Daniels to lead the way. In an undertone he gritted: "Blast 'em! They mutter, mutter all the time. Why can't a pine act like a spruce, and keep its trap shet?"

Daniels pulled aside to take his turn in bringing up the rear, after the fashion of those who travel long distances on snowshoes; but Slacker, from the

depths of his Mackinaw collar, insisted: "Keep a-leadin'. My right shoe hurts the big toe."

"Take off your moccasin and straighten out your sock," Daniels advised. "Prob'ly a thread of yarn got twisted into a knot."

"Naw; it's in my foot. Wrenched it some way. I'll stick it out till we reach Pine Point. Ye can go on from there if ye want to, but I shall put up a lean-to and rest for the night."

"Oh, I'll stick along with you if your foot's bum. The drink can wait. We started too late to cruise Jackman's before dark."

Down the lake they drifted, with the wind at their back, two slowly moving dots on a field of virgin white, hemmed in by the blue-black evergreens and a background of purplish white hills, the only living life to be seen in all that desolation. The day died, and at last they were in the shelter of the Point.

As they entered the growth, Slacker broke his long silence by awkwardly warning: "What's been said up behind is to be forgot. Understand?"

"That was jest 'tween you 'n' me. I don't tell my affairs to every one," assured Daniels, unslinging his camp ax and attacking a clump of saplings.

Using a snowshoe, Slacker cleared a pit at the foot of some spruce, and had a fire blazing by the time Daniels dragged in trimmed saplings and a huge quantity of spruce boughs. The two made quick work of erecting the lean-to.

"Ye look all petered out," suddenly remarked Slacker, as they paused to rest before the low shelter, with the fire between them.

"I feel sort of rotten," admitted Daniels, sinking back on his couch of boughs and closing his eyes. "Didn't git enough sleep last night."

"Make up some of it while I'm cookin' the grub," urged Slacker, now quite buoyant in spirit.

Daniels pulled a blanket over him and rested his head on his pack. The soughing of the wind in the pines and the crackling of the fire lulled him into a delicious sense of ease. Slacker placed the "spider" on a bed of coals and filled it with slices of bacon. This done, he fell to gazing at the muffled figure, and, as he stared, he once more became conscious of the whispering of the wind overhead.

"Tryin' to tell things, be ye?" he defiantly muttered, scowling up at the stately canopy. "Huh, ye couldn't tell nothing, even if folks could make out yer lingo!"

Across the fire the blankets stirred uneasily, and he pricked his ears as he caught the low, hurried murmuring of Daniels' voice. His chum was talking in his sleep. Slacker's eyes glistened. He might learn much, something more to offset his own admissions so foolishly made at the head of the lake. He rose softly and cocked his head, a grim smile playing about his lips. Daniels had boasted of being past the sleep-talking stage; but now his wits were flown, and he might divulge many things. The sleeper mumbled inarticulately; then came a rush of audible words. With a black oath, Slacker staggered back, glaring incredulously, his thick lips twitching but unable to frame speech. Daniels rose to a sitting posture and blinked at him inquiringly, the sleep still glazing his vision.

"What's the row?" he finally demanded, as Slacker continued holding his tense pose. And he gathered his heels under him and shoved his right hand inside the blanket.

"Who be ye?" exploded Slacker, in a shriek, his giant body trembling.

"Why, Slacker, old pal——"

"That's my name. But who be ye? What d'ye know about—Jasper Martin?" yelled Slacker, his whole person seeming to radiate fear and venom.

The season's tan hid the telltale pal-

lor in Daniels' face, but his voice was husky as he repeated: "Martin? I don't know no Martin."

"Ye lie, ye hound! Ye've been talkin' in yer sleep. Ye jest spoke his name —and other things. It's a game to git me!"

"I couldn't say a name I don't know," protested Daniels, his wide-open eyes staring curiously at the furious face confronting him through the smoke.

"Ye've been campin' on my trail to git me. The c'mpany sent ye up here to git me. The whole game was cooked to dish me!" raved Slacker.

"You're crazy, old man. Simmer down. No one could touch you for killin' that man in self-defense up on the Allegash. You didn't hear me right ——"

With a horrible laugh Slacker snatched up his rifle, and exulted: "I guess ye're hearin' me, all right. And what's goin' to happen in the next minute won't be whispered by no wind to no trees. Don't ye move a peg. Ye lost that terbaccer a-purpose to git my nerves all fretted up. Ye made me think I'd let on things in my sleep. Ye made me feared to sleep 'less I got to talkin', and I kept awake till I was 'most crazy. Oh, I see it all now! Ye made——"

"Jest listen to me for a second——"

"Ye made me believe I'd said something 'bout 'blood' in my sleep. Then I lost my nerve. I wasn't myself back there that night when I told things. And I said things I'd never yipped if I'd been myself. Oh, I've mulled it over all the way comin' down! That's why I put in here for the night. I was 'fraid, but I wasn't sure. I couldn't make up my mind what to do with ye. Now I know."

"You're goin' to croak me?" whispered Daniels, huddling low in his blankets.

Slacker grinned triumphantly, gloating. "I sure be! But afore I do, I'm free to say I croaked Martin. Yas, I got the money. Ye can know it all now. It seems good to tell it to some one who won't blab. I'll git it off my chest, and there won't be any chance of my yappin' it out in my sleep. Yas, I got the money, more'n six thousand dollars—and salted it. Now, ye smart detective——"

"Hold on! I'm not a detective!" thundered Daniels, as Slacker slowly lifted the rifle.

"Oh, ye ain't? Then who be ye?" And a hideous grin twisted the big face.

"I'm Ed Martin—brother of the man you killed!" cried Daniels, flopping over on his side; and two flashes of flame leaped to meet each other in the smoke of the camp fire.

The mill manager met him at the office door, saying: "Jackman phoned you were on the way, Mr. Martin. But you should have waited till your arm healed a bit."

"I couldn't wait any longer," sighed Martin, sinking into an office chair. "You found the money?"

"Under the corner of the boarding house. It surprised me he should confess."

"I threatened to bury him at the Point, where the pines would be talking over his grave year in and year out. He had a greater horror of that than of dying. So he told everything. Lived about half an hour."

The manager gazed at the wounded man admiringly, and exclaimed: "To think of scaring the truth out of him! That's a new way of getting a man."

"It worked both ways. He nearly got me after I fell into my own trap and talked in my sleep," wearily reminded Martin. "Ten years in the police has taught me it's better and more humane than the 'third degree.' But poor Jasper! I never dreamed I should ever have to run down his murderer."

# A Silken Snarl

By Ross Callaway

**A tough job for the business-problem expert who is employed to plug the leak in an apparently highly efficient silk mill whose machinery was modern and where the men acted as though their pay envelopes were something more than a pension**

WHEN Norton Dana decided to break away for himself he knew exactly what he intended to do. He was that kind of person. But when he came to put it into words, he had his troubles. To announce in a phrase that a graduate of Massachusetts Tech, with a supplementary training in accounting, was able and anxious to reorganize factories, install cost systems, standardize methods, in fact, raise efficiency—a word he hated—presented a man-size problem. He had never admired the way his old firm had styled themselves—Efficiency Experts. In each succeeding year of the five during which he had risen to be chief engineer, the title had seemed triter to him.

At last he had placed under his name on his new letterheads two simple words, "Business Problems." That described his job.

Two other items had given him long periods of thought.

The first was his office. Dana was a profound believer in atmosphere. He said that every firm should have a stage manager. So when he fitted up his own offices, he put himself in the place of a prospective client and set to work to please that client.

When you went into Norton Dana's suite, you felt at once that only because the secretary of state and the first lord had come especially for a discussion of the needs of the nation, were you delayed an instant in being admitted. It had been a long search before the fourteen-year-old Chesterfield, who conveyed this impression, had been found.

With the closing of the outer portal behind you, there came over you a sense of confidence and quiet. The leather-covered chairs in which you waited were actually comfortable. The dark panelling suggested a directors' room in a downtown bank; and the carpets felt good to your feet. At your elbow was a library—not a lot of books.

There was no sign of business, no clattering of typewriters, no rattling of gossiping small talk, no noise from the street. These things were all there; but they were out of sight and sound.

Dana's own office, when you reached it, deepened the impression and added distinct personal touches of Dana himself. The whole thing was like the effect you pay two dollars for at a Belasco first night.

The second item had not been so easy. Dana had as individualistic ideas on this subject as the other, and he considered it more important. Four unusually efficient secretaries—judged by generally accepted standards—had come and gone before Miss Selma Hunt's advent.

In a sentence he had explained to her his modest requirements:

"I must have a secretary who does all the usual things perfectly, the unusual things better than that—and has second-sight."

After a month he raised her salary to exactly twice the former figure and did not mention the matter at all. Had she asked it, he would have doubled it again, for Miss Hunt did the impossible. And it was characteristic of Norton Dana that he never wondered at her ability or his own luck in acquiring her. He had to have a Miss Hunt, and so, of course, he had one!

He maintained no staff and accepted only as many commissions as he could execute himself. As for the details of his business, he touched the button that summoned Miss Hunt, poured the raw materials into her ears, and did not even listen to hear the wheels go round. It sufficed him that the machinery of the office ran on rubber tires, and, as a consequence, all his working hours were at the disposal of his clients.

He could telephone, from Chicago, instructions on a dozen important matters in the certainty that upon his arrival in New York, the following day, every detail would have been attended to; even if the work involved hiring half a dozen extra typists and serving them a midnight lunch. Miss Hunt never asked how a thing was to be done; she did it.

So when his secretary brought Dana the card of Mr. Harlow M. Hines, he said:

"Send me his history, and then send him," in the most perfect faith that he would receive a typewritten memorandum of excerpts from the proper authorities, bearing on his caller, in an incredibly short space of time, and without any fuss about it. It was the engineer's practice to know more about his callers than they knew about him.

"A business friend of mine told me about you," began Mr. Hines, settling largely in one of Dana's guaranteed-not-to-creak chairs, "so I dropped in to see if you could tell us where our money's going to at the mills. If you can, you're all he said about you."

Dana observed that his client was proving an excellent live-load test for his guaranteed chair, and watched the experiment with professional interest.

"What is the trouble, Mr. Hines?" he asked.

His visitor looked his surprise. Two notable things about Dana were his soft voice and his hard jaw. People sometimes, in appraising him, put too much faith in their ears and not enough in their eyesight.

"Not a thing, Mr. Dana," answered Hines, with a wave of his hand that fluttered Dana's papers. "We've got a fine mill, make the best goods on the market, charge fair prices for them, pay our people well—in fact, as a philanthropic institution you can't beat us. But we've got a lot of hard-headed stockholders that think a mill is operated to pay them dividends. There's no pleasing some people!"

"I see—you want me to answer my own question?" suggested the engineer.

Mr. Hines chuckled dangerously—for the chair—then suddenly became very serious. Leaning approximately forward, he tapped Dana impressively on the knee.

"*I* think there's crooked work somewhere, but blessed if I can put my finger on it. Of course, what I'm going to tell you is strictly between us."

"My dear sir," remarked Dana dryly, "if I talked about my clients, I should very soon have no clients."

"Good! Here's the way it stands. We always made money up to three years ago. That was a bad year in the silk business, so we were not surprised to just break even. But in '13 and again last year, although our sales went way over our old high mark, and conditions in the trade were normal, we didn't make a cent. Each year, figuring on estimated sales and costs, we expected a good profit; but when our balance sheet was made up—well, there wasn't any balance!"

"You mean your costs have shown profits on itemized sales right along?"

"Not exactly. You see we set up standard costs for our different lines some years ago, and still use those figures for estimating—with the necessary allowances for changes in labor rates and raw-silk prices."

"Then what is the matter with your cost system?"

"Nothing that we can see. We've got a good system—put in five years ago by Manning & Edwards"—Dana nodded—"and our accounting department is pretty good—yet somehow the money slips away. I'm dead sure that somewhere in our woodpile there's an African, and a darned clever one!"

Dana wound his watch chain around the little finger of his left hand and then carefully unwound it again. His black brows made a straight line except for a queer upward twist just under the left temple. His friends said that if Dana's left eyebrow were pasted down he couldn't think at all.

"You must have a suspicion, Mr. Hines. Who handles your cash?"

"Our accountant, Barnes. But *he's* all right. He's a hard worker—too hard. He needs a vacation—wanted one this month, but I put him off so he could be on hand when you got there. You'll find him a big help, I guess."

"Any one else?"

"No. They're all good boys—just as interested in the mills as I am."

Norton Dana considered.

"I can come up to the mills Monday," he offered.

"Fine!" Mr. Hines' expansive face resumed its usual what'll-it-*be*-boys expression as he derricked himself cautiously erect. "We'll be looking for you."

When his visitor had gone, Dana returned to his desk and eyed the discouraged chair sternly. His sensitive ear had caught it faintly groaning.

Padford Mills was as uninspiring as its name. Dana swung from his train into a typically ugly New England mill town—useful, but not pretty. He climbed into the rheumatic station bus for the usual springless ride to the hotel. Across the sluggish little river, which contended with the railroad for the doubtful honor of having been the original excuse for the town, he could see the long, brick buildings of the silk mills. His neighbor in the ancient carryall followed Dana's glance.

"Bound for the Standard, too? There's nothing else in this hole."

"Yes. Are you?"

"Oh, I drop off here every month or so and tackle old Hines," he grinned. Grinning seemed to come easy, and Dana suspected that the ride down had proved monotonous to him, principally because you can't be sociable alone.

"That so? I wouldn't have picked you for a raw-silk salesman," said the engineer.

"You're a good guesser, friend. When little Eddie sells raw silk, as you call it, the boys in State Street will put on mourning bands. Not me! Sometimes these country moguls buy quicker-moving stuff than raw silk."

"I suppose they do," agreed the engineer, without interest.

"Yep, the quicker the better for some of 'em. I've got a friend—sells wildcat oil stocks. *He's* unloaded over there at the mills, he tells me; but I guess it wasn't Hines—he's too wise to tackle that stuff," concluded the talkative one with the eagerness to be heard that is the sure hall mark of a certain type. With such, questions breed suspicion, but indifference stimulates the lingual muscles. Dana had studied people more than facts.

"Now take Hines—you'd think he'd jump at my line—bonds. Nothing like it!" The bond salesman brought out his points by pulling the forte stop. "Too conservative for the old boy. *He's*

looking for action. Some day he'll get bitten good; and then he'll listen to me!"

"I should think any one would," returned Dana, as they disembarked. Dana had gone to his room before his late fellow traveler had made up his mind as to what the engineer had meant by that remark.

Norton Dana did not hurry to the mill office. He bathed leisurely—he had been in the train less than three hours—donned fresh linen, and inspected his perfectly pressed suit critically. At length he decided that, as it had come from his valet's hands that morning, it would do. When Dana was to be away from his snug bachelor quarters for as much as one night, "Little Doris" went with him. This was his traveling bag. Dana had named it, after seeing a talented magician produce an entire dinner set from the ears and other hiding places of a young person whom the program so labeled. That is not what the perspiring porters in hotels all over the country called it, however. They were apt to speak rudely about it—among themselves. If the expedition were to last for a week, Dana took a trunk. A client of Dana's once said, that if he ever saw the engineer in a suit that looked anything but brand-new, he would have felt exactly as if another man had appeared in his underclothes; and yet, on occasion, Norton Dana had allowed grease to spatter, unnoticed, on his spotless garments that he might get a closer view of operations.

In the hotel lobby, Dana bought a pocketful of cigars and sent off a telegram. Then he set out for the Standard Mills.

A young man, passing, heard the engineer give his name to the office boy. Out of the corner of his eye, Dana saw him turn to look back as he entered one of the inner offices.

Mr. Hines greeted him cordially; but Dana marked the touch of authority that reflected his importance at the mills.

"What do you want to do first?" asked Hines briskly, dismissing his timid stenographer with a curt word. "Look at our books, I suppose? I'll ask Mr. Barnes to step in," and he reached for the buzzer.

"No; I will look over the mill, first."

"But our trouble must lie in the office; we know the mill is all right."

"Perhaps. I will get to the office later." Dana was eying the fittings of his client's sanctum negligently, and Hines had a feeling that the matter was settled.

"Very well. I'll introduce you to Bardwell—he's our superintendent—and tell him you're to see everything you want to. We're strict about visitors."

Bardwell proved easy to classify, and Dana had him thoroughly card-catalogued in three minutes. Together they set forth to inspect the mills.

It was quickly evident to the engineer's trained eye that the Standard Mills were in excellent shape. Things moved. The machinery was modern and the men acted as though their pay envelopes were something more than a pension. At the silk-storage building, he stopped to watch a truck being loaded.

"We use the central-stores system," explained Bardwell, in answer to a question. "You see we've got five mills scattered down the valley—that's No. 2 just opposite, and you can see the roof of No. 3 beyond. The other two are around the bend about half a mile from here. We keep all our raw materials and finished fabrics here, and receive and ship from this central stores. We can watch the goods better that way; and the other mills call for stuff as they need it."

"On requisitions, I suppose."

"Oh, yes; let me show you."

They stepped into the stores office,

and Bardwell presented the engineer to Shanks, the storekeeper. The name fitted.

"Show him your sub-stores files, Billy," said the superintendent.

Billy complied.

As Dana ran rapidly through the system, he found much to commend, and said so.

"Yes. Our stuff's too valuable to take chances with. I guess you'll find our inventory's all here, eh, Billy? Why, we checked our books against the annual physical count within eight hundred dollars last year," returned the superintendent proudly.

By the time the whistle roared at five-thirty, Dana had a very good conception of the mill itself, and a more than casual idea of the mill methods. And he was forced to admit that both were, in the main, excellent.

From Bardwell also he had learned, during luncheon at the hotel, where he had insisted upon playing host, the line-up of the office force. Mr. Hines, while styled treasurer, was in reality the chief executive of the company, although not a heavy stockholder. The president and principal owner, old Morton D. Brown, rarely visited Padford Mills at all. There were besides the accountant, Barnes, a purchasing agent and an office staff of some fifteen clerks and bookkeepers. The sales manager was located in Boston.

The following morning Dana was ready for the books. The accountant proved to be the young man whom Dana had noticed in the hall the day previous. He was not quite so obvious as Bardwell, Dana decided. He acted as if his brain turned over more than once in every twenty-four hours. As for his evident nervousness, that might well be the natural result of feeling himself under inspection.

"We'll take a look at the general ledger first," said Dana, when they had reached the accountant's own office. "I believe you don't run a mill ledger."

"No—I'll send for it. Helen," he called to the outer office, "bring the ledger, please."

The girl who presently appeared impressed Dana as worth looking at twice. There was more in the look she threw Barnes than bookkeepers usually reserve for their superiors. Something, too, in the way Barnes took the book suggested a mute apology on his part. She was a rather striking brunette, and the engineer could not help thinking that some of the accountant's nervousness had been communicated to her.

Dana set himself to a study of the mill accounts. Except for an occasional question, he worked silently, making a few notes as he went along. Last of all, he ran over the cash and the capital accounts.

"Your cash runs rather high," he commented once.

"Yes. It's our directors' policy. We discount all our purchase bills," returned the accountant promptly. Dana continued to examine the ledger.

Presently Barnes was called away. The engineer turned swiftly back to a certain page, and, pulling a glass from his pocket, looked closely at several entries.

For the rest of the day, he went swiftly through the statements, cost summaries, and stores accounts. He was impressed here, as in the mill, by the workmanlike methods of the place. Young Barnes knew his business. His answers to Dana's questions were exact and illuminating. But the first impression—of anxiety on the accountant's part—persisted. Dana purposely prolonged his examination until most of the others had gone.

Abruptly he said:

"What are you afraid of, Barnes?"

"What do you mean?" demanded the accountant, reddening.

"You have a fairly good system of

accounts here; I can see that you know how to run it, and yet you've been scared to death ever since I came. Now what's the answer?" Dana was looking at him with those steel-drill eyes of his that did more than merely see.

"I *am* scared," Barnes confessed steadily; "because I don't know what there is to be afraid of. That sounds foolish; but it's true. You're going to find something crooked—if you haven't already—and I don't know what it is."

"What makes you think I will run onto something?" asked the engineer.

"Because I've heard of you, and," he lowered his voice, *"there's something to find."*

"Then why haven't you dug it up yourself?" Dana's soft voice was softer than ever.

"Do you suppose I haven't tried?" demanded Barnes. "I've come down here at night, tested balances, checked entries, worked like a slave to hunt the thing down. No use! Don't you imagine I can see who will be the goat when the big smash comes?"

"If you don't know how it's done, you probably guess who's doing it. What's your idea?" said the engineer.

For a fraction of a second Barnes hesitated, then he answered evenly:

"I haven't a suspicion—I don't *know* there's anything queer, even. It's just a hunch, after all."

It was evident that he would say no more. Only Dana's wonderful faculty for drawing people out had made him say so much, and the engineer was too wise to press him further.

As Dana passed the stenographer's room his ear caught the sound of sobbing. He paused, then pushed open the door. The treasurer's secretary lifted a frightened face.

"What are you crying about?" asked Dana in his soft voice.

"It's—nothing," stammered the girl in confusion.

"I take it that Mr. Hines has been a bit more boisterous than usual," remarked the engineer calmly. "I thought I heard him fulminating a while back."

"It's—just his way," said the girl breathlessly. "He doesn't mean anything—but he frightens me."

"Why don't you tell him so?"

"Oh, I wouldn't dare! He'd——"

"I see."

Dana had recourse to his watch chain.

He had already noted the bullying tone of his client and the step-easy attitude of the office force. He had met that type of self-made autocrat before.

The girl hastily dried her eyes and Dana went away.

After dinner Dana went for a long walk. With a cigar between his teeth, he strode rapidly along, thinking. There were a number of things that puzzled him, and he could always concentrate when he walked. Furthermore, he had a very definite purpose of looking in at the mill offices. He fancied that somebody might be working overtime.

At a little after ten he arrived in front of the building. Except for a single globe over the door, it was all dark. He tried the alley that ran down one side, and found a window open six inches. It was in the accountant's office. Dana peered in. At first he could see nothing; then he fancied that a faint streak of light shone underneath the door leading into the main office. He listened, then cautiously raised the sash and crawled inside. He tiptoed to the door and very slowly pushed it open slightly.

At a desk in the next room, he could make out Helen Searle, the bookkeeper, at work over a mass of papers by the light of a pocket flash.

For nearly half an hour he stood motionless, watching her. She ran over the pile with convulsive speed, unconscious of anything but her search—sorting, comparing, jotting down figures on a slip. Unconsciously Dana found himself admiring her spirit. Alone, at

night, in a lonely office building, not once did she glance behind her.

At last she gave a low exclamation and suddenly slid several papers into her waist. Norton removed his hat and stepped into the room.

"Give me those vouchers, please," he said.

The girl had turned at his footsteps, but she did not cry out. Dana held out his hand.

Silently she gave him the vouchers.

"Thank you. Now perhaps we had better put away the rest. The watchman might happen along, and I am afraid it might be embarrassing, Miss Searle."

Still she did not speak, but watched him as he rearranged the scattered sheets and returned them to the file case. For all his manner betrayed, it might have been ten o'clock in the morning. When the last drawer was in place, he turned to find her close beside him.

"What kind of a man are you? What are you going to do? You have caught me red-handed. I—I was going to burn those vouchers."

"Exactly. You knew that they were not numbered, and burning them would get over a couple of awkward entries in the ledger." The words were harsh, but the tone conveyed only a gentle chiding. "I can appreciate your interest in Mr. Barnes, but I don't quite understand why you—or Mr. Barnes—didn't attend to this little detail some time ago." Dana was smiling gravely.

"Herbert doesn't know anything about it!" she cried passionately. "He had nothing to do with those doctored entries you found to-day—he hasn't even seen them."

"May I ask how you know I found any queer figures?"

"I saw you—through the cashier's window. Afterward I got the ledger and located them myself. It was too late to do anything but this——" She pointed to the vouchers Dana held.

"And Barnes does not know you are here to-night?" the engineer persisted gently.

"Do you think he would have let me come?" she demanded scornfully.

"So you never saw those entries before?" mused Norton Dana, half to himself. "I thought you ran the ledger."

"I do—and I *know* those figures were all right a week ago! But what's the use? You won't believe me. It's your business to make a case against some one, and I have played into your hands." For the first time she showed signs of being a normal woman. Her lip quivered.

"Miss Searle, do you believe that?"

"Herbert says you never fail," she answered, with a catch in her voice.

"Sometimes I do. I want you to understand." There was a compelling quality in his eyes—no longer the gray of cold steel. "A failure with me is a job in which I don't get through the overlying complications to the bare truth. Can't you trust me to keep on digging, no matter how things look on the surface?"

The girl looked long and searchingly at Dana, as though she had never seen him before. She had never thought of him as anything but a hound, bent on tracking down a victim.

Dana did not wait for her to answer. Abruptly he said:

"I want you to do something for me. Here is a list of seven names. Will you get me the local history of those men? If you have to be away from the office, make some excuse, for I may need that information in twenty-four hours. I think you can do it."

She looked at the engineer in amazement; but Dana, evidently considering the matter settled, went on:

"This is no place for you to be found, you know. Shall I go first?"

"Hush—listen!"

Then he heard it—footsteps coming through the accountant's office. It was too late to retreat. Dana switched on an electric light.

The door behind him opened, and he could see Helen Searle's face go white. She was looking beyond him at the doorway.

"If that is all clear, Miss Searle, I think you had better be going," he said quietly.

"I think she had."

Dana turned to confront Herbert Barnes.

"Good evening, Mr. Barnes." Dana smiled pleasantly into the astounded face of the accountant. "You are just in time to take Miss Searle home—I am sure she would approve that arrangement."

"What does this mean? Helen—what are you doing here at this hour—with this man?" Barnes' words fairly fell over each other.

Helen Searle was voiceless. Suspicion leaped into the young accountant's eyes.

"Just a moment, Barnes—before you say whatever you are going to; and then, don't say it! People's whole lives have been ruined by one word spoken too quickly." There was a command in Dana's modulated voice.

"I'm not talking to you!" cried Barnes. "I'll listen to your explanation later."

"You'll listen right now, Barnes," returned the engineer distinctly. "Furthermore, there will be no explanation—unless Miss Searle cares to make it. She had not the remotest idea that I intended coming here to-night, until I walked in and discovered her working overtime—trying to find the very thing that's been worrying the life out of you—coming down here alone at night for what? Because it might help *you!* And you stand there filled with mean suspicions of her! Pah! It is men's treatment of women that makes me sometimes doubt whether evolution is synonymous with progress. If you're half the man I think you are, you will apologize to Miss Searle now—and very humbly—for what you didn't say!"

The engineer had not even raised his voice. Barnes stood uncertainly, looking from one to the other. Dana's cold gray eye never left his face.

Gradually the blaze receded from Barnes' eyes.

"I've been worried," he muttered, "and this upset me—it was so sudden. Will you forgive me, Helen?"

"There is nothing to forgive, dear," she answered swiftly.

Dana stepped quietly out and closed the door.

Dana was very busy for the next few days with the cost clerk and in the mill. He spent a good deal of time with Bardwell and Shanks, and listened with Job-like patience to their dissertations. Dana gathered the impression that most of the silks arose and saluted when the superintendent passed by.

There was apparently little method in his wanderings about the mill buildings. He would turn up in some remote department, whose foreman, coming to demand his pass, stayed to tell all he knew and afterward wondered why he had talked so freely. The great weave sheds with their hundreds of clattering looms did not see him at all.

Miss Searle was away from the office for a day; and then Dana received at his hotel a bulky envelope from her. When she returned, the engineer greeted her as though he had never seen her outside of office hours. Barnes he saw little of except as some question proved too much for the cost clerk.

On Thursday evening Mr. Hines asked Dana home to dinner with him. It was the treasurer's belief that he had been the instigator of the party. As a matter of fact, Dana, who had profound

theories on the relation of social intercourse to his own peculiar business, arranged it. As a general thing, he derived greater pleasure from eating in the company of people possessing more than one dimension diameter, and not given to bullying timid girls to the point of tears; but with Dana, on a job, business was business.

Mr. Hines, although a bachelor, owned a comfortable house and a real cook. Dana guessed that the cook was much more important to his host than the house. The arrangement bore out the idea. An observer would have said that on the ground floor was a dining room and some other rooms.

As Dana ate his quarter of the meal, he felt no pangs of conscience in complimenting Hines generously on his choice of cooks. The treasurer beamed.

"I picked you for a judge," he admitted. "A man can't use his head all day unless he's properly fortified—that's my motto. A man that don't eat right, you can't always trust—he don't think right."

Dana smiled.

"I seem to recall a sentiment along that line that Shakespeare put into Cæsar's mouth. Didn't the great Roman suspect Cassius largely on the evidence of his 'lean and hungry look?' "

"I guess so," returned Hines, a bit at sea. "I don't get much time for classics. It keeps me on the jump to see that we don't turn out any 'lean and hungry' goods at the mills."

"You certainly succeed in that."

"You've found that out? I thought you would. The mill end of the business is all right, as I have told you. How's your work in the office coming?"

"I am about through, Mr. Hines."

"Have you found the answer?" asked the treasurer eagerly.

"I think so. I would like to ask you a question."

"As many as you like—everything's open to you," said Hines heartily.

"What do you think of Mr. Barnes?"

"Barnes? Why, he's a mighty good man—had him five years—a wonder with figures."

"Yes, I know that; but I mean his character."

"I've never heard anything against him," said the treasurer thoughtfully. "He's been kind of nervous lately, but I guess that's just overwork—he's pretty busy."

"He acts as cashier as well as accountant," observed Dana.

"Yes, of course. Do you mean you think Barnes has been stealing from us?" in rising excitement.

"It's a principle of mine not to make statements till I can back them up," returned the engineer imperturbably. "Did you know that Barnes had lost considerable money in an oil deal?"

"Why, no! I never knew he speculated."

"Not speculating—exactly. He though it was an investment."

"I wouldn't have suspected Barnes of crookedness in a thousand years! Are you sure?"

"I haven't accused Mr. Barnes of anything," Dana reminded him.

Hines got up gradually, for reasons of prudence, and walked up and down in evident agitation. Dana smoked quietly and watched his host. His watch chain wound and unwound about the little finger of his left hand.

"You haven't *said* anything, but you think you've got something on Barnes. Well, you'll have to show me almighty convincing proof before I'll believe he's crooked—that's flat!"

"I like to hear an employer talk that way, Mr. Hines. As I told you, I am accusing no one yet; and I can assure you that, when I get to accusations, they won't be empty ones."

Dana looked at the mantel clock and rose.

"I've got to catch a train for Boston—there are a few details that I want to

clear up. When I get back I'll be ready to talk."

Saturday saw a solemn-faced gathering in the treasurer's office. Only one of the seven directors was missing. Even old Morton Brown himself had come on from Boston.

Dana plunged at once into his recital.

"After a preliminary look at the mills, I tackled the commercial accounts," he explained, "and almost at once I ran into a series of doctored entries, totalling a large amount. The method is simple. There are acids which will take out ink without injuring the surface of the paper enough to be noticed. Then new figures are written in. Skillfully done, such a forgery is hard to detect.

"But this work was not skillful—it was such a bungling job that almost any one could have discovered it."

Dana paused to let that sink in. Then he resumed:

"I looked up the vouchers covering the forged entries, and found them without difficulty. Apparently the thief had not had sense enough to destroy them. Incidentally your vouchers should be numbered serially—they are no check at all at present. Will you have Mr. Barnes bring in the books, Mr. Hines?"

Barnes was pale, but he held his head high, as he faced the directors.

Dana turned the pages of the ledger rapidly.

"Mr. Barnes, look at these entries, please. Did you ever see them before? You can see that the first figures were erased and others substituted."

"So that's it!" The accountant turned to Dana, breathing hard. "My books aren't straight—I'm the thief, and you've earned your fee! But I'd like to know who forged those entries. If you say I did—you lie!"

The engineer's expression did not chance a jot.

"Perhaps I can answer that question," he said quietly. "Just now I want you to say whether you did?"

"No! Believe me or not, gentlemen—I never saw those figures before."

"Yet you needed money to cover your oil losses——" began Dana.

Barnes went white.

"Yes," he said hoarsely, "but I didn't steal to get it."

"That is all, Mr. Barnes." When the accountant was gone, Dana looked about him.

"I agree with Mr. Barnes," he said. "Your ordinary crook steals cash. I felt that this was no ordinary crook. What could he steal of enough value to pay for the risk—that was not money? Obviously silk. At first glance, all your materials appear well guarded; but as I investigated the stores system more closely, it became evident that a crooked storekeeper or truckman, with enough brains, could get away with valuable goods undetected. I looked them up—the five storekeepers at the different mills and the two truckmen. The storekeepers and one of the truckmen passed muster."

A director broke in:

"I have always understood that our system was very complete, Mr. Dana. No materials can be taken without a properly signed requisition, and our auditors check all the requisitions annually."

"Very true; but there's no system that can't be beaten, Mr. Ellsworth; and the proof is, that yours has been. Duplicate requisitions were printed, numbered to correspond to the regular ones. The truckman presented a forged requisition to the central-stores keeper, got a load of silk, drove off ostensibly to another mill, and later turned in his copy of the material order with a forged receiving receipt. The forged orders were presented near quitting time, and it was easy to take the goods to an outlying barn and later dispose of them.

"The forged order went through the

usual channels, and eventually was charged against the mill it was supposed to come from. Furthermore, the thief was too clever to concentrate on one mill—he distributed his favors impartially, so the apparent material cost for all the mills rose together. You see they were being charged with silk that never got into the product at all. Your system of standard costs didn't show this; and not having a mill ledger, there was no way of knowing that your standards were several miles from the facts."

There was a surprised buzz from the directors.

"But I fail to see how a truckman could dispose of such a thing as silk in bulk," objected Ellsworth.

"He couldn't—alone; but his principal could," retorted Dana.

"Suppose the truckman betrayed him," suggested another director.

"That's where the real thief showed his brain. That truckman is wanted for burglary in three cities—he has served one term. He is getting old, and is afraid to take the chances he used to. In Padford Mills he is safe, and his employer pays him well—and knows his police record.

"I worked up some cost figures of my own and found that the material item had begun to mount about the time dividends ceased. I failed to see where the extra cost was getting into the goods—and I have had some experience in silk mills. Then I did a little sleuthing, and the whole thing was plain. Will you ask Mr. Barnes to step in again?"

"This is the most amazing thing I ever listened to," declared Morton Brown.

Dana smiled. "I have proofs, Mr. Brown."

"Let's have them, then," snapped out the old financier. "If what you say is true, the whole business is the most contemptible trick I ever heard of."

Barnes had come in and stood listening.

"Isn't it?" The engineer was speaking again. "By the ingenious method I have explained to you, the thief has been making away with thousands of dollars' worth of your goods undetected. I was retained to make an investigation. The queer ledger entries were provided for me to find, so that the real stealing would be overlooked. That those entries might mean jail for Barnes did not deter the real culprit for a minute."

"Why, the rat ought to be skinned alive," burst out Morton Brown. "Who is he?"

"I am inclined to agree with you," said Dana slowly. "Unfortunately we live in 1916. Of course, my employment was merely a sop to you gentlemen. It was never intended that I should get at the real trouble—the steady stealing, which has been depriving the stockholders of dividends, to pay for the speculations of Mr. Harlow Hines."

There was a guttural outcry. Every man in the room turned to see the treasurer, his big body shrunken, slump forward in his chair, with his white, flabby face covered by his shaking hands.

It was a month or two later that Dana, deep in the intricacies of the Buford Bolt Company's troubles, received a correctly engraved invitation to the wedding of Miss Helen Searle and Herbert Bailey Barnes. He looked at it in bewilderment for some minutes; then buzzed for Miss Hunt.

"Who are these people?" he wanted to know.

"The bookkeeper and the accountant at the Standard Mills," she reminded him promptly.

"Oh, yes!" he said vaguely. "I suppose I'm expected to send a present. Will you attend to it?—and file this among the working papers on the Standard job."

# A Chat With You

THERE are two contradictory principles or forces in nature. Wherever you look, among animals and men, plants and rocks, you will find them, fighting each other. The world of to-day, the world of material things as well as the world of ideas, is the result of this conflict. The peace and apparent quietude of nature is like the immovable fixity of two wrestlers evenly matched, locked in a close embrace, neither yielding and neither gaining.

WE call the forces by different names at different times. One is the granite rock, the other the wind and the sea. One is the principle of inheritance of characteristics, the other is the opposite principle that Darwin called "natural variation," which makes the children unlike as well as like their parents. In politics, one force is conservatism, and the other radicalism. In art, one is the classical spirit, and the other the romantic. In society, one is aristocracy, and the other democracy. In religion, one is authority, and the other rationalism. And when we come to consider ourselves and the future, and why we came into the world and what will happen to us here and hereafter, we call one predestination and the other free will.

TO yield absolutely to either one of these forces is to court ruin most successfully. The conservatives will chill you to death, and the radicals will burn you up. The aristocrats will turn you into a fool, and the democrats into a boor; too much freedom will make you run to seed, and too much restraint will smother you. Too much respect for authority and what other people think will kill all your native originality, and too much confidence in your own ideas without due consideration for the opinions of others will lead you to ruin. Had Columbus listened to what people told him, he never would have discovered America. Had Darius Green, who tried to fly off the roof of his barn with homemade wings, been less confident in his own ideas, he would never have had such an awful tumble. Where does confidence end and conceit begin? What is the boundary line between liberty and license? What are we to do, anyway, among so many apparent contradictions?

WE suppose the best way is just to be natural and follow the path where moderation and common sense seem to lead us. Truth is at neither extreme, but somewhere in the middle. It is best to follow the advice given to the young man who tried to drive the chariot of the sun. They told him to go not too high and not too low, but to follow a golden mean. In running a magazine like THE POPULAR, we think that one good rule is to give the readers the sort of thing they expect to find in the magazine. The other good rule that might be taken to contradict this com-

pletely is the one that bids us to be original, to give you something new and different, to keep from getting into a rut and publishing the same sort of thing over and over again. How are we to combine the two ideas?

IN the next issue of the magazine we will give you a novel that is utterly unlike anything you have ever read in this or—so far as we know—any other magazine. We know, of course, that you will be interested in it, that if you once start the story you are sure to finish it. What we do not know, and what we cannot guess, will be the state of your feelings while you are reading the story. We know how you will feel when you come to the end. You will be satisfied. You will feel like recommending the story to some one else to read. But when you are halfway through, you may feel for a time that the story could not have actually happened, that there is no good explanation for it, and that it isn't the sort of thing you are accustomed to look for in THE POPULAR. Rest assured, however, that no matter how strange and inexplicable the happenings may seem, there is a good explanation for all of them, and that you will be perfectly satisfied with it when you come to the solution of the mystery at the end. The one thing we intend never to do is to publish a story that plays a trick on the reader. We mean the sort of story in which the hero experiences a lot of impossible adventures and wakes up at the end to find it was only a dream. "The Volunteer Nemesis" is not that kind of a story. The last scene in the drama which unfolds as you read is as thrilling as it is real and convincing. The story was written by Perley Poore Sheehan. It is by far the best thing he has ever written. You get it complete, a full-length novel, in the next issue of the magazine.

SHEEHAN'S story is set in New York. The long short story, or short novelette, which follows it in the same issue of the magazine is laid in the northern wilderness. It was written by A. M. Chisholm, and it is fully up to his standard. It is called "The Mothers," and is the tale of two mothers—an Indian woman and a bear. There is something strong, rugged, and masculine in everything that Chisholm writes. His humor is robust; all the emotions he arouses are vigorous, full-blooded, and manly. This study of life in the wilderness, in its power, its simplicity, its deep humanity, is something any one is the better for reading. This story alone would make the magazine worth buying.

THERE is another novelette of an arresting quality in the same issue. It is "The Last Conquistador," by Patrick and Terence Casey. There is another good baseball yarn by H. C. Witwer in the next issue. Also there is a bully race-track story by Hugh Fullerton, one of the best-known sporting writers in the world. There's a story of the secret service by Victor Maxwell, a Western story by Knibbs, a mystery story by Rohde, the war correspondent, and a circus story by Cooper. When you read the next issue of THE POPULAR, you will come to the conclusion that the world is full of a great variety of interesting things.

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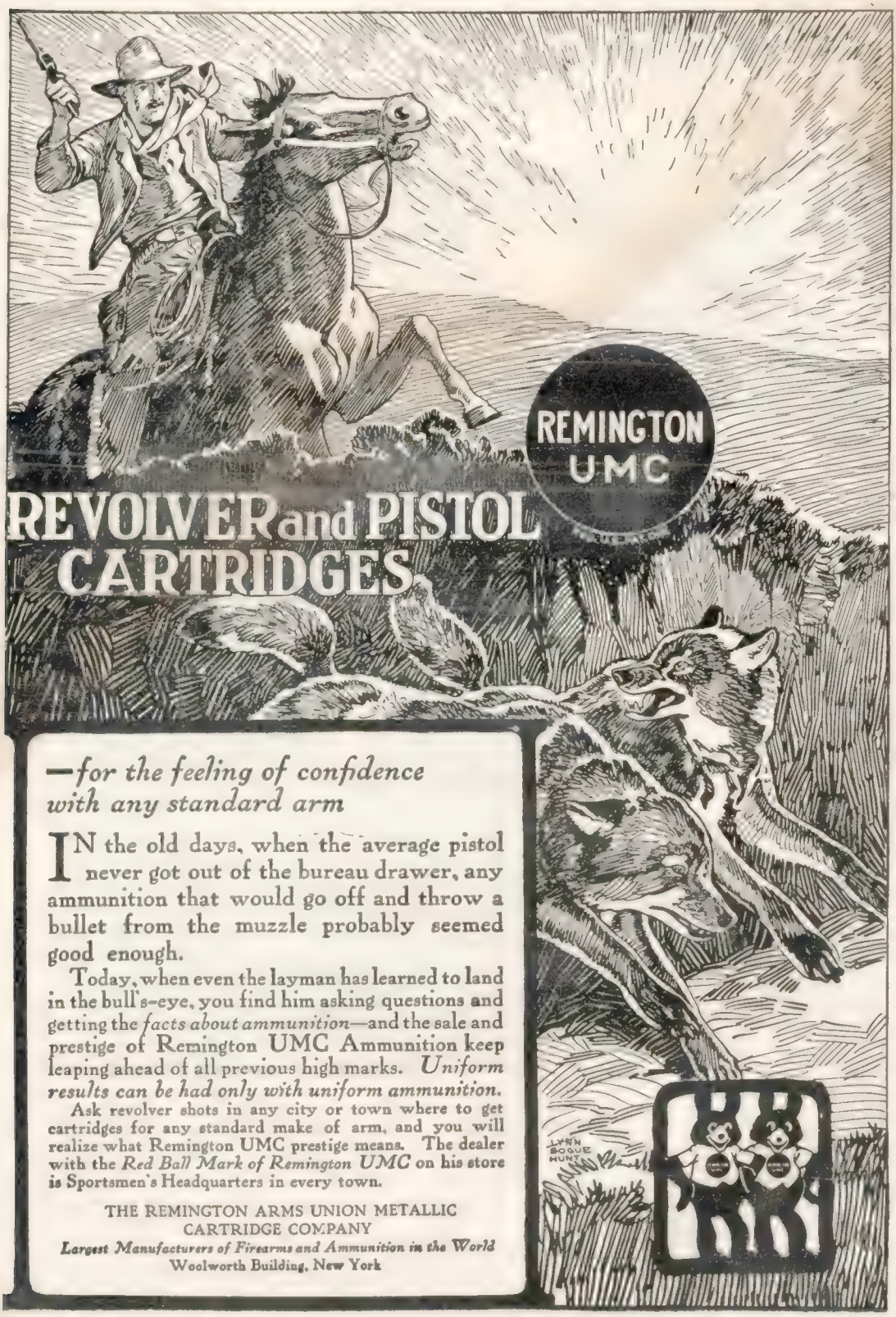


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THE spreading vogue of sports in the United States has given an added fillip to the soft leisure lines of a man's clothes. Motoring especially has helped to puncture the notion that to be truly "smart" you must be starched and stiff, and have that sleek, over-valeted air of the mincing dandy.

For next autumn there are three clear signs in the offing—the renaissance of the fashions of the fifties in afternoon dress; the continuing influence of the military spirit upon evening dress, and the wane in morning dress of the miscalled "English style" with its exaggeratedly narrow shoulders and over-slim trousers.

For sack suits, the softest fabrics are used. Hard-finished stuffs do not lend themselves well to the present fashion, which is all curves and no angles. Moreover, the weight of autumn and winter woolens has been greatly reduced, as heavy materials are needless and clumsy.

Perhaps the most important feature in the cut of the sack suit is the lowering of the very high waistline of the coat. This was intended to make the wearer taller and longer-limbed by seeming to add several inches to his stature, but it is being dropped. Another feature is the slight broadening of coat shoulders to take away that pinched look which was anything but manly. A third feature is the lopping off of "turn-ups" on trousers, so that they can be shaped with a forward flare that prevents "kicking up" behind.

A fourth feature is the restoration of the "button to skip" at the bottom of the waistcoat, and the lengthening of the points, so that they curl up and tip out, giving a man a deep-creased waistline. A fifth feature is the raised or inserted sleeve top on coats, which lends a close-shorn, clean-cut, military look to the shoulders.

*Autumn Soft Hat with Broad, Flat Brim.*

A sixth feature is the revival of the small-change pocket in many coats. A seventh feature is the low-lying collar with a notch that comes far down on the shoulder. An eighth feature is the very broad, blunt lapels on some coats.

A ninth feature is the dropping of the center vent on the "smartest"

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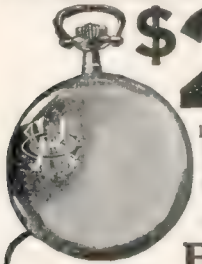

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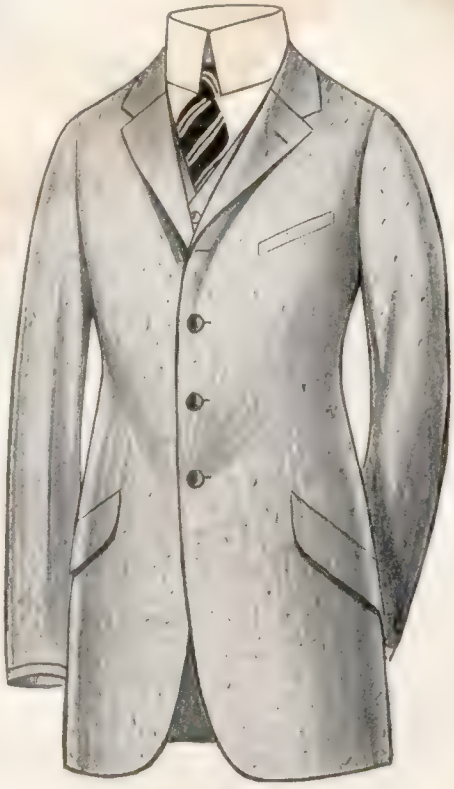
coats to allow a very full-draped effect at the bottom. A tenth feature is the reviving vogue for different-color or "fancy" waistcoats in plain colors, fold drapery of skirt.

Extreme sack suits turned out by the best tailors show such a very full drapery of skirt in the back and at the



*Smart Early Autumn Sack Coat.*

sides, that it recalls the fashions of the fifties. These are further suggested by the ultra-modish "spring-bottom" trousers, which flex a trifle over the instep, instead of swinging clear of it, as last summer.

While sack coats look snug-waisted and hip-hugging, they are really cut loose. The back curves into the figure and then curves out again, and the skirts terminate in natural drapery, with no attempt at a flare. Many double-breasted coats will be worn this season.

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defines it as a club and evening lounge jacket, pure and simple. Moreover, this season, when greater formality governs in both day and evening clothes, this distinction is even more sharp-etched.

However, you might as well drill against granite with a point of putty as to plead for keeping the Tuxedo in its place. It is, and will go on being, a jaunty rover, overstepping the bounds as it pleases.

A new Tuxedo waistcoat is black silk, having lapels faced with black satin. It is undeniably smart in cut and finish, with the high waistline to comport with the new and higher jacket closing; the athletic armholes; the bottom button to skip, and the like.

With this waistcoat one wears a wing collar having straight, deep tabs, and a snug-knotting black satin tie to tally with the satin lapel facing.

Fashion keeps at the same old game of tenpins. No sooner is one style set up, than comes along another to bowl it over.

Two years ago, the loose-swinging topcoat was sent packing, save for travel, country, and looking on at sports, and the close-fitting affair became the preferred town coat.

Next autumn, the boxlike topcoat is on the rim of a revival for day wear. It falls from the shoulders with a straight drop, and terminates in a full-fold drapery of skirt.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the frock coat will be a trifle "smarter" next autumn than the cutaway or "morning coat," which has been overdone. The newest frock is a very high-waisted coat, silk-faced to the buttonholes, with a left breast pocket and three buttons in each side, only the bottom one being used. These are fastened with a link just like that seen in the fashionable evening coat.

The soft-rolling, low-lying lapels down to the last button open in the shape of a "V," and the spread of skirt below forms an inverted "V." The skirts, as on all coats this season, are very full-draped, and the waist is quite tight. With this garment, those who dress in advance of the crowd wear the double-breasted, white waistcoat, just as they wore it years ago.

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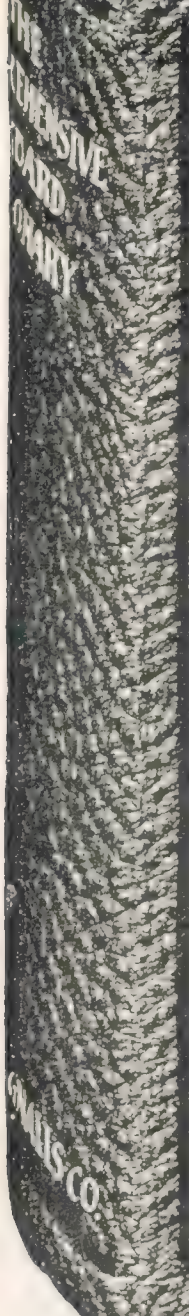


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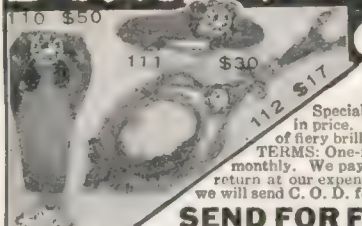

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